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IMPRIMATUR.

Hic liber vere Christianus qui si Primævam spectes pietatem, Summam Eloquentiam, Rationum pondus nihil in eo deest quo minus possit nos Omnes quales tam accurate describit, vere Christianos efficere; Puriori ævo sane dignissimus est nisi quod tam potens sit qui vel nostrum Sæculum transformaret in melius. Benedicat Deus Operi & Authori.

THO. TOMKYNS.
R. Rmo. in Christo Patri ac Domino Dno. *GILBERTO* Divina Providentia Archiepiscopo Cantuariensi à Sacris Domesticis.

Allestree, R.

THE CAUSES OF THE Decay of Christian Piety.

OR AN

IMPARTIAL SURVEY

Of the Ruines of

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

Undermin'd by Unchristian Practice.

Written by the Author of

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

INIMICVS HOMO FECIT HOC. *Matth: 13.*

LONDON,

Printed by *R. Norton* for *T. Garthwait*, in S. *Bartholomews* Hospital, near *Smithfield*, 1667.

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Mr. *Garthwait*,

HAVING in my hands a *Practical* Treatise concerning *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety* so visible in this our Age; written by the Excellent *Author* of The *WHOLE DUTY OF MAN*: and having obtain'd permission to make it publick, I was in some doubt whether the present disturb'd State of affairs, would not make it reasonable to delay the Edition: but considering that times of difficulty and trouble bring thoughts of Vertue into their minds, who forgot their Duty and their God in affluence and quiet: I am apt to think a Discourse of this Kind seasonable enough at this time. ——

Almighty God give you some repair for your * late great Calamity: As it was the *Authors* kindness that you should have the offer of this Tract, whatever it prove, so I think it will be a little the more seasonable, that it comes as a New-years Gift, *&c.*

* *The late Fire in* London.

Your very loving Friend,

January, 1667.

H. E.

THE PREFACE.

THOUGH this be the first appearance this Tract has made in the world, yet its Being is of somewhat a more ancient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since: when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view; had adjudg'd it, if not to perpetual darkness, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: and herein I must bespeak the Readers candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.

BUT would God I were to apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse, might become one entire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution, might supersede these disquisitions above our failances and aberrations. But alass, I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated; vice daily gaining not only strength, but impudence: nay we are not only become witnesses against our selves by declaring our Sin as So-

dom, *but we have forced God also to attest against us by punishing us in a manner no less conspicuous and manifest. And surely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophets advice,* Hag. 1. 7. to consider our ways, *to reflect not only on those robust, gyant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven; but also to sift out those secret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that* חמר *that inflamable* bitumen, *the untemper'd morter is with which we build our Babel, by discovering those misperswasions and false confidences, wherein many of our other guilts are founded: in order to which this slight Tract offers its feeble, yet well meant aids; being forced out of its retirement, and like* Cræsus *his dumb Son, compell'd to speak by impulse of the present exigent: and how despicable soever the Mite contributed be in its self, yet if it may provoke the more wealthy to cast in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the* Corban. *'Tis evident this is a season which not only warrants, but exacts the most importunate endeavours of perswading men to those things that belong to their Peace.*

FOR although 'tis true that every state of sin, sets us also in a state of hostility with God, yet our present condition seems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis we know, high insolence against a Prince to despise and violate his laws, but when to that are superadded contumelies, and design'd affronts to his person, this is such an accumulated outrage, as will vanquish the most resolv'd Patience. And this alass appears to be our case: we have long indulg'd to our selves the breach of all Divine laws, gratified every appetite, every passion and lust with the forfeiture

of

of our allegiance, and as if this would not serve to render us irreconcilable enough to God, we are now grown to subjoyn malice to licentiousness; project not so much to please our selves, as to displease him; profess a contempt not only of his commands, but himself; and seek no less to dethrone Him, than abrogate those. Thus have we made it a kind of personal quarrel, and by those impious blasphemies we daily dart against Heaven, do as it were dare the Divine Majesty to vindicate its self. Whether his great longanimity may have given our Hectors *a fancy, that they had vapour'd God (as they are us'd to do men) into a tameness, I shall not examine: but his late proceedings with us sufficiently testifie that he means no longer to decline our challenge. He now appears to avow the enmity as openly as we have done; and has already given us competent essays, how* fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, *Heb.* 10. 31.

'TIS true indeed that he has formerly own'd his controversie with our Land, and by a long series of great and heavy calamities attested himself the God to whom vengeance belongeth, Psal. 94. 1. *Yet as great Monarchs use to quell lesser insurrections by their Lieutenants, and subordinate Officers, but when the rebellion grows high and desperate, then to encounter it in their own persons; so is it here observable that God then Chastised, and tried to reduce us by inferiour instruments, found us out* Lictors *among our selves, and made one mans sin the punishment of anothers: but now as if he had the same jealousie for his honour which* Joab *had at the siege of* Rabba *for* Davids, 2 Sam. 12. 28. *as if he fear'd to be rival'd in the glory of our ruine, he takes us into his own hand, marks us out, as he did* Pharaoh, *to be the Trophies of his*

own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged enemy.

FOR first, has he not as Moses *speaks,* Deut. 32. 41. *whet his glittering* Sword *? Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture style) made it drunk with blood ? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging PESTILENCE, which Marcht from one part of the Nation to another in a kind of Triumphant progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave* Abraham, Gen. 13. 17. Arise walk through the land, in the length thereof and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. *Whether it may not thus fatally complete its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our* Dan *to our* Beersheba, *is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the negative; for as it is not to be doubted but there were in* Judea *as great sinners as those on whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell,* Luke 13. *that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the Judgement: So also that great* unsensibleness *many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode; it being not only a dangerous symptome, but a probable means of drawing that calamity to our selves. When God sees we will suffer nothing by way of consent and sympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compassionate.* Thucydides *mentions it as the effect of the great Plague at* Athens *that it had extinguisht humanity; brought in a kind of ferity and barbarousness among them, rendring them openly villanous to men, and blasphemous against God;* θεῶν φόβος, ἢ ἀνθρώπων νόμος οὐδεὶς ἀπεῖρξε, *there was no restraint of law or religion, one part being desperate*

rate upon prospect of their danger, the other presumptuous upon the contemplation of their Escape; and sure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had somewhat of the same operation. Those compassions which the novelty it seems at first gave us to sufferers in this kind, seems now quite extinct; so unconcern'd are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the species *of mankind, though backt also with that closer tye, which the spiritual consanguinity has superadded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumstances, so particularly) from the great hast has in many places been made, to lay aside those publick* Humiliations *& intercessions which were recommended to us as well by the command of Authority, as the common distress; but have been cast off without the substraction of either of those motives. Whether we are duly* mindful of the afflictions of Joseph, *that cannot afford one day in a moneth for a solemn reflection on them, I must leave to every mans conscience to discuss. But sure we are no less wanting to our selves than them in this neglect; the office being no less designed for Antidote than cure, to prevent the Judgement where it is not, than to remove it where it is: and if we will neither deprecate on our own behalfs, nor intercede on others; we are sure as improvident, as uncharitable, and may justly expect the fatal event of both.*

IN the interim, although the present respit from destruction, and our own deceitful hearts flatter us and say Peace, Peace; we have all reason to conclude that God is not attoned, the quarrel and hostility goes on, and his hand is stretcht out still, Es. 5. 25. *And so indeed we*

find it in other dismal events. Slaughter we know is not the only effect of War; which as it destroys the lives of many, blasts the supports and Joys of more. This consequence of hostility we find well exprest by the Prophet Joel 2. 3. The land is as the Garden of *Eden* before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness, *and herein also hath the Lord of Hosts, the great God of battle shewed himself mighty against us, he has invaded us not only with Sword, but FIRE: and in so stupendous manner desolated the glory of our Land, that no humane fury, could have procured, or even have wisht the like vastation and ruines.* That City which was great among the Nations, and Princess among the Provinces, *Lam.* 1. 1. lies buried in her own Ashes, *and is both Funeral-pile and Urne to her self, and what neither foreign nor domestick enemies could in a succession of many ages effect, one blast of the breath of his displeasure,* Psal. 18. *has performed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal sense the Apostles affirmation,* Heb. 12. 29. that our God is a consuming fire. Plutarch *tells us when* Fabius *sackt* Tarentum, *he took not away their Images, but said,* ἀπολειπωμεν τὲς θεὲς Ταραντίνοις κεχολεμμένες, let us leave the *Tarentines* their Gods that are offended with them. *'Tis our Calamity to be signally under the indignation of our incensed God, which in that great Captains judgement, was somewhat more dreadful than the worst inflictions of War: for what industry soever has been used to entitle either the negligence or designs of men unto our overthrow, yet sure never any judgement had more legible marks of Gods immediate hand: such as shew he meant to revenge the abuse of his former gentle methods; that those who would not be reformed by the*

slighter

slighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find a judgment worthy of God, Wisd. 12. 26. *And sure such was this, which both for its greatness and irresistibleness does well own its Author, and shews his wrath was accended to a very excessive heat, that thus poured out its self not only like, but in Fire,* Lam. 2. 4.

I shall not here assume the Polititians part, and weigh the detriment we have sustained by it in our civil interest, of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full estimate; it rather suits my design to observe what relates to our spiritual concerns, whilest Gods dwelling places *were involved in the same ruine with ours; his own peculiar portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains,* Es. 64. 11. Our holy and beautiful houses where our fathers praised him are burnt with fire: *this though perhaps least considered, is sure not the least sad circumstance, had only the scenes of our luxury, or our fraud been destroyed, it might have sent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented Gods houses the better, for being destituted of our own; but when these also are made parts of the common heap, 'tis a sad testimonial that our very religion was provoking; That that pageant-like piety which we deposited in our CHURCHES, only to make a shew with on holy-days, served only to defile those holy places, and rendred them so polluted as required no slighter purgation than that of FIRE. 'Tis we know not long, since those mansions sacred to the Prince of Peace, were even in the vulgar obvious sense, made magazines for War; but yet more so in reference to that Pulpit-wild-fire, which set the Nation in combustion; whether that strange Fire which some of our* Nadabs *and* Abihu's

introduced there, may not (even at this distance) have done its part to the drawing down this FIRE *from Heaven, I leave to their serious reflection. But neither the* Hypocrite *nor the* Seditious *must ingross the guilt of this ruine: The* Atheist *vyes with both; for alass what should God do with Temples among those, who pay him no worship? or why should he let those sacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him serve but as occasions, and incentives to blaspheme him? They have long said with those in* Job, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; *and now 'tis but equitable (I had almost said* Civil) *to take them at their word, and no longer reside among those who so avowedly disclaim him.*

AND this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this dismal vastation: we know men use not to deface those houses, where they intend to inhabit: and sure this abhorring his Sanctuary, *and* casting off his Altar, Lam. 2. *is a dreadful sign, that he means no longer to continue his residence among us; indeed we find in Scripture that his promise of cohabiting is always limited to those who own themselves his people; and therefore when so many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no justice expect the blessing appendant to it.*

BUT perhaps this will seem to such no formidable thing; Gods so withdrawing of himself is but agreeable to their wishes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and so rather matter of complacency than regret: but 'tis to be considered that there is another presence of God that will infallibly succeed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the Philistines *we shall know the God of* Israel *is among us*

by

by his Plagues, 1 Sam. 5. *or to make a yet more dreadful comparison, we shall like the damned in hell, discern his presence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearness in our sufferings. And sure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profanest of us, those that have most despised or loathed the soft breathings of his Word and Spirit; will find it yet harder to endure the whirlewinds of his wrath, which will snatch from us those secular advantages for whose pursuit we have neglected* the better part, Luke 10. 42. *and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we desired to have of spiritual.*

OF *this our late Calamities have given us a sad* Preludium, *and God knows how soon we may see the last scene of the fatal Tragedy, it being too probable that this is Gods last Experiment upon us, like the Causticks and Scarifyings to a Lethargick patient; if this bring us not to sense we are like to sleep on to destruction: And alas what uncomfortable symtomes appear even in this point also. Who is there that (unless awakened by his personal concernments) seems at all to startle at the noise of publick ruine? When God in displeasure threatned the* Israelites *that he would remit their conduct to* his Angel, *and not go himself with them. The text says,* they mourned and no man put on his ornaments on him, *Exod.* 33. 4. *or as the* LXX, κατεπένθησεν ἐν περιθικοῖς, *and the Syriack,* ܘܐܬܒܝܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܝܣܪܝܠ ܠܘܬ ܛܘܪܐ ܘܐܬܪ ܒܐܪ ‖, they stript themselves of their Armour, their ruffling garb of War, and appeared in the penitential dress of sackcloth and ashes: *but now that we are given up not to a conducting but destroying Angel, what signs of remorse do we shew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we substracted, upon the sense of Gods anger?*

What

What nicety in cloaths or diet have we cut off in sympathy with the nakedness and hunger of our afflicted brethren? Nay, do not the unreasonable follities of too many among us, look as if we triumpht in their miseries, found Musick in the discordant sounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of Nero, *who played while* Rome *burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a most prepposterous thing, a kind of impious Solecism to revel under the menace of judgements.* Thus saith the Lord, A sword, a sword, it is sharpned to make a sore slaughter, it is furbished that it may glitter, *should we then make mirth?* Ezek. 21. 9, 10. *and certainly it less befits us against whom God has not only prepared, but used his sword; who are not only under the threats, but actual Execution of his vengeance, and what is it but interpretatively to prompt him, to yet sharper inflictions, by shewing him that these have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignation God resents this perverse, this contumelious behaviour, we may read,* Esay 22. 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth, and behold joy and gladness, slaying Oxen and killing Sheep, eating Flesh and drinking Wine; eating and drinking for to morrow we shall dye: *Upon which follows, that severe denunciation*: Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you dye. *Of so deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as lasting as our lives, and like the fretting* leprosie *in the house,* Levit. 14. 45. *can be removed by nothing but its dissolution.*

O then let us not adde this to the heap of our other provocations, mistake impudence or desperation for courage;

and

and frantickly defie that omnipotence which we are ſure we can not reſiſt: but ſince it has pleaſed God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us tranſcribe his copy, be as kind to our ſelves as he has been to us, and ſtop in our career as he has done in his; not ſo madly affect a full parallel with Sodom *and* Gomorrah, *as to force him to deſtroy that remnant,* Eſ. 1. 9. *which alone diſtinguiſhes our caſe: but rather take pattern from* Nineveh; *cry, and* cry mightily to God, *joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both. And could we be perſwaded to do this with the ſame ſincerity, and univerſality, we might hope it may be with the ſame ſucceſs alſo: would every one who has contributed to the accending, as induſtriouſly contribute to the appeaſing of Gods wrath: would all who have brought their fire-brands bring alſo their tears to quench them, as there would be no dry Eyes in the Nation at the preſent, ſo might it prevent as great a Generality of weeping ones for the future; ſecure us ſuch a tranquility here, as may calmly convoy us to that impaſſible ſtate,* where all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes, where there ſhall be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, nor pain, *Rev.* 21. 4.

The

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CHAP.

K. DAVID

PSALM. 119. v. 136.

Rivers of water run down mine eyes because men Keep not thy Law.

EZEKIEL. *chap. 37. v. 3*
Son of man can these dry Bones
live? — Lord Thou Knowest

CHAP. I.

The Character of Christian Religion, demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Vertue and Sanctity.

THE holy *Psalmist* gives it as part of the Character of Pious persons, and therewithal a description of their felicity, *Psal.* 92. 13. *That they shall bring forth more fruit in their Age*: and what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher, and more eminent manner appliable to the whole body united: And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian *to grow in grace*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 18. we may by all rules of Proportion, conclude that the collective masse of such, the whole Church is by this time near *attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, *Eph.* 4. 3. And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilest the premises stand firm 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation as to forget our experience: If we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premises also. Christianity is in its self of so prolifick a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its proselytes, that it is hard to imagine, that

that any branch should want a due fertility that is engrafted into so vigorous a stock.

FOR first, in its spring and original it is most supernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man than he purposely assumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that disseminated this doctrine, and that in order to the *purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and certainly his choice abundantly justifies its propriety to that end, and his descent from Heaven on that errand puts so venerable a solemnity upon it, that though his descent were very astonishing, yet it will be much more so, that it should fail of the designed effect.

AND indeed did our Faith give us no clue to lead us to the author, yet its composition would speak it to be of no humane extraction, its precepts are so excellent and refined, so agreeable to the more spiritual part of our temper, and so apt, as to forestall, so to cleanse and sublimate the more gross and corrupt, as shews flesh and blood never revealed it. Nay farther, so effectually providing for all those advantages to mankind, which the wisest of mens laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all stand before it like the *Magicians* before *Moses*, and by their impotence tacitly confess it to be the finger of God. 'Twere too large a Theme to confront them in the several instances, let it suffice to observe one which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate *clearness* of heart, which Christs, and only Christs law requires. This is the only proper basis on which to superstruct, first *innocency*, and then

then *vertue*, and without this the most rigid exactors of outward purity, do but transcribe the folly of him, who Pumps very laboriously in a Ship, yet neglects to stop the Leak: or the worse tyranny of *Pharaoh* in *requiring Brick without Straw*: so far is it from a severity in our law-giver, thus to limit and restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the greatest indulgence: by no means the laying on a new burden, but the furnishing us with an Engine to bear with ease that weight which otherwise the stoutest *Atlas* must sink under. And were but this one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not only facilitate but ascertain the obedience to all the rest. If the *first sparks* of ill were quencht within, what possibility is there they should ever break out into a flame? How shall he *kill* that dares not be angry? Be *Adulterous* in act, that did not first transgress in his desire? How shall he be *perjured* that fears an oath? Or *defraud* that permits not himself to covet? In the like manner all *positive acts* of vertue, are but the natural effects of the interior habit. Where the love of God is seated in the Heart, 'twill operate in all the faculties, keep them in a busie endeavour of doing acceptable service: when *fear* is planted there, it will break forth in outward reverence and duty; and so proportionably 'twill be in every other instance. 'Tis therefore an advice well becoming the wisdom of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 4. *to keep the heart with all diligence*: but then it is withal the work of him who is greater than *Solomon*, to teach us how to do this: for *unless he keep that City the watchman waketh but in vain.* If he instruct not

not to secure those issues of life, they will betray and ruine, appear indeed *the savour of death unto death.* Now of this divine art of *Tacticks* and defence, Christianity is the only School, and therefore most fitly qualified for the producing all those supernatural excellencies to which the timely prepossession of the heart, is the rudiment and principle.

AND as the *preceptive* part enjoyns the most exact, and elevated vertue, so is it most advantageously enforc't by the *Promissory,* which both in respect of the kind and value of the rewards; and also the manner of proposing them, is most exquisitely adapted to the same end.

FOR first, if we consider the nature of the things promised, we shall find they are not gross and *carnal,* such as may court and gratifie the bestial part of us; but such as are proportioned to the supream and leading principle, as feast a *Soul,* and suit with the capacities of an *intelligence.* All the beatitudes the Gospel tenders to its votaries, either relate to the *purity* or peace of the mind in this life; or else to its completer *felicity* hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconsidered, though the addition of all temporal necessaries be promised, yet even those are for the Souls sake, either to secure it from the sin of solicitude and distrust, or to preserve it a useful instrument for the others service. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be observed, that flesh and blood can not inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corruption must be put off,

must

must be calcin'd and spiritualiz'd; and then made glorious, be clothed upon with Glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation, there is no *provision for the flesh*, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of Gods care. Indeed had we proposals of a *Mahumetan* Paradise, were we to expect our bliss only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them before hand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophets phrase, *to enlarge our desires as Hell*, and by frequent antepasts excite our gust for that profuse perpetual meal. Or were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts, 'twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise mans advice would then cease to be Eirony, *Eccles.* 11. 9. *Rejoyce O young man, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine Eyes.* Had we only the prospect of a *Canaan*, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering Sword could give, as the salvation of a *Joshua*, and the affluence of milk and hony could produce. 'Twould be no wonder, if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always as they desiring meat for our lust, projecting the gratifying those desires in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our Religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those Diviner

joys of which sensuality has no capacity or taste. What pretence can we have to cherish that *here*, which we must wholly be divested of *hereafter*, those immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally suggest to us, the necessity of preparing our appetites, and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: for since the pleasure of any thing results from the agreement between it and the desire, what satisfaction can *Spiritual* enjoyments give unto a *Carnal* mind? Alass, what delight would it be to the Swine to be wrapt in fine Linnen, and laid in Odours: his senses are not gratified by any such delicacies, nor would he feel any thing besides the torment of being with-held from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutish Soul find in those purer and refin'd pleasures, which can only upbraid, not satisfie him. So that could we by an impossible supposition phancy such a one assumed to those fruitions, his pleasure sure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Those *Eyes* which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazled, not delighted with the *Beatifick vision*; neither could that *Tongue*, which has accustomed its self only to Oaths and Blasphemies, find Harmony or Musick in a *Hallelujah*. 'Tis the peculiar priviledge of the pure in heart, *that they shall see God*; and if any others could so invade this their enclosure, as to take Heaven by violence, it surely would be a very joyless possession to these men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greatest aversation and Antipathy.

Antipathy. So that holiness here, is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of Bliss hereafter: and therefore unless men will contrive to annihilate their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this Spirituality of the promises, infer a necessity of purifying themselves, and being capable at least of innocent Celestial joys: and since that only can be done by vertuous practice here on Earth, the Obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensable. And as the *nature* of the promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent *value* encourage and animate. *Hope* is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of Hope is more or less *desirable,* so is the endeavour more *intense* or *remiss*; and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the *Spirit* gives: that *Spirit* which as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that Inheritance. He in the Sacred *Scriptures* has drawn us a Map of the Countrey which we are to enter: and sure we may say of it as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan, Numb.* 14. 7. *the land is an exceeding good land.* For first, if we consider the Negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the Ills, destructive or affrightful unto humane Nature. *There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain,*

Revel. 21. 4. Here alas we are infested by all these. *Sorrow* and *Pain,* prey and insult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a Gourd, which is not like that of *Jonah,* smitten with these Worms: and then comes *death,* the grand devourer, and spares not *life* it self. Nay, those little *respites* which we have from these, are so embittered by unpleasant expectations and Presages, that we are sad before we are *afflicted*: in *pain* without a *disease,* and in *death* in the midst of *life*: and then a State exempted, not only from the Calamities but the Fears of these, may well deserve to be lookt upon with appetite.

BUT Heaven is designed for our reward, as well as rescue, and therefore is *adumbrated* by all those *positive excellencies* which can endear or recommend. It is a *Crown,* and that not of *thorns,* such as our *Saviours* was, and such as the more affected *Diadems* of the world oft prove unto the wearer, *but one of Glory*: nor is that *Crown,* nor that *Glory* like our *sublunary* splendors, which suddenly vanish, and leave the possessors to the greater obscurity and contempt: but 'tis *permanent,* such *as fades not away,* 1 *Pet.* 5. 4. or in St. *Pauls* phrase, *an eternal weight of Glory.* But to give you its more comprehensive Character, *'tis a being with the Lord,* 1 *Thess.* 4. 17. Nay, 'tis a possessing even God himself. *He shall be their God, Rev.* 21. 3. and what can he want who possesses him who is all things? How can he fail of of the most ravishing delight, that stands before him *in whose presence is the fulness of Joy,* and *at whose*

whose right hand are pleasures, and those not short or transient, *but for evermore?* So indefeisible is our estate in those *Joys,* that if we do not like mad prodigals sell it in reversion, we shall when we are once invested, be beyond the possibility of ill husbandry, not have it in our power to undo our selves. Now surely these are great and precious *promises,* such as may well sustain the weight of that inference the *Apostle* builds upon them; and engage us to *cleanse* our selves from all *filthiness* both of *flesh* and *spirit,* and *to perfect holiness in the fear of God,* 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. for they address to that *Principle* which is confestly Predominant in our *Nature*; so that if the love of *Christ* cannot, yet the love of our *selves* may constrain us. How must it then affront and baffle the enticements of sin, when we compare its empty vanishing *pleasures* with those solid and durable *joys?* What a forestalling will it be of Satans markets, that God bids so much fairer for us: offers us that to which his ταῦτα πάντα σοι δώσω, *all this will I give* (could he make such a whole-sale) can bear no proportion, and how then shall we ever barter it away for those little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his profers, than a *get thee behind me Satan?* For alas! can we remember that we are *candidates* for a Kingdom, and yet retain the abject spirits of *slaves?* Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depose our selves before hand here? Suffer every the vilest lust to rule over us? Is so glorious a prize annext to the victory, and will

it not animate the fainteſt heart, and feebleſt hands to the combate? What Lions can we fear in the way which this hope is not *Sampſon* enough to encounter? How *light* are our heavieſt, how *momentary* our moſt laſting Afflictions, if balanced with that *eternal weight of Glory*? Are we ſpoil'd of our goods, here is a reſerve of treaſure which no *Thief*, neither the flye, nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the ſequeſtrator can invade. Are we reduced to our *Saviours* deſtitution, not to have *where to lay our head, yet we have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands eternal in the Heavens*. Are we reproacht for the name of *Chriſt*, that *Ignominy* ſerves but to advance our future *Glory*, every ſuch *Libel* here, becomes *Panegyrick* there. Nay, are we perſecuted to death, that ſends us but to take poſſeſſion of the Crown of Life. Upon ſuch ſure grounds does our Chriſtianity ſet us. While we make good its condition it puls out the ſting of all that is moſt deadly. And in a more comprehenſive ſenſe, poſſeſſes us of the priviledge promiſed the *Diſciples, that nothing ſhould by any means hurt them, Mar.16*. The moſt adverſe chances being but like the ploughing and breaking the ground, in order to a more plentiful harveſt. And yet we are not ſo wholly turned off to that reverſion, as to have no ſupplies for the preſent; for beſides the comfort of ſo great and certain an expectation in another *life*, we have promiſes alſo for *this*. Even of all thoſe internal and ſpiritual ſatisfactions which attend the *practice of piety*. The feaſt of a good

Conſcience

Conscience is the true *Christians* daily diet, and sure whatever the rich men of the world think, he only can be said to fare deliciously: nay, he has yet more *supernatural* food, *Manna* rain'd down immediately from Heaven: the *Holy Spirit* sent on purpose to refresh and support him: those Joys which differ rather in degree than kind, from those which are to be his final portion. And that the *Soul* may not be too much incommoded in her house of clay, there is provision made for that also, such necessaries secured to the body, as may keep it in *Tenantable* repair: we have *Christs* express promise for it, that *to those that seek the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things shall be added*: if not that superfluity which may oppress and load, (render the *body* rather the Tomb than Mansion of the *Soul*) yet such as may sustain and support us: and sure 'tis easie to decide which is the happier lot. In short, we are sure of enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at *Eternal Bliss*: and certainly he must be of a very sluggish or querulous humour, that shall *demur* upon setting out, or demand higher encouragements.

AND as the *nature* and value of the *Promises* render them most proper engagements and incentives to all *vertue*; so if we consider the *manner* of proposing, we shall find them in that respect also highly contributive to the same end. For first, they are clear and express, not wrapt up in dark *enigmatical* insinuations, wherein men must exercise their *sagacity* aswell as their *faith*: but

revealed with that plainness, that 'tis impossible for any who knows but the letter of the *Gospel* to be ignorant of the Eternal rewards it proposes. And herein the difference belongs to *Christianity* above all other *Religions*, some whereof have left men so much in the dark, that many *Sects* among them have denied the immortality of the *Soul*, and sure they were but faint encouragements they could propose unto that *vertue* which was to perish with them. What should animate them to the rugged severe tastes of restraining appetites, subduing passions, eradicating habits who discerned no rewards for blameless *Souls*. 'Tis true indeed *vertue* is in her self perfectly amiable, though she brought no dowry, but experience shews us she has not many *Platonick* lovers: and when so few are ambitious to wed Her, when she brings an Eternal inheritance with her, we may easily guess how little she will be taught without it. When men once conclude that their *Spirits* shall vanish into the soft Air; the inference is very obvious, *Come on, let us use the creatures as in youth*; as we find it elegantly pursued, *Wisd.* 2. But of those who acknowledged a future being, their preceptions were very misty and obscure. The *Heathens* had such confus'd notions of their *Elysium*, that the *Epithet* of *shades* belong'd more properly to the darkness than the refreshment, and was a reward fit for the votaries of those ambiguous *Oracles* they consulted. And proportionably to the obscurity of their hopes were the Exercises of their *vertue*; their *Piety* was even overwhelmed

and

and confounded by the multitude of their *Deities*; nay, which is yet stranger, their *Gods* themselves seem to have been lost in their own croud: else sure the *Athenians* would never have inscrib'd an Altar to the unknown *God*: and indeed their offices were generally such, as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little discerning of their *Worship* as of their *God*. 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkness; had mysterious recesses to which the common worshipper had no admittance; such as were to acquire a veneration only by not being understood: and though this must needs deprive their services of that spirit and quickness, which constitutes the *vertue* of devotion, yet alas their *Religion* had more than that negative contrariety to *Vertue*. Many of their *worships* being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest *vices*: and their *Divinity* taught them to violate *Morality*. A deceit *Satan* could not probably so long have triumpht in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven, for sure they could not have suppos'd their *Gods* of such mutable inclinations, as to affect *purity* in their cohabitants, and *pollution* in their Votaries: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impeccable state hereafter to the most flagitious criminals on Earth.

AS to the *Jews* 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the *Oeconomy* of immediate Revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven, from whence their *Law* descended,

ed, yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under *Moses* his veil, had rather dark *adumbrations,* and those too overwhelmed with the multitude of expres's temporal promises. The earthly *Canaan* lay so fair and open to their prospect, as easily intercepted their view of the *Heavenly*; and their *faith* must remove, at least overlook, that *mountain* before it could come to any sight of the *Horizon* and extended *Sky*. Nay, when 'tis remembred that the *Sadduces* a great and learned part of their Doctors denied all future being, we must think the intimations of it were very obscure; it being scarce imaginable, that any considering men should think the *Souls* expir'd with the *Body* upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after State to assign it. So that though they wanted not *figures* and *shadows,* or as the Apostle calls them, *patterns of Heavenly things, Heb.* 9. 23. yet they seem'd not to have been well understood, and the generality of men were not only in their Persons, but their Understandings denied entrance into the *holy of holies*; penetrated not that mystical representation, which was within the Veil: and answerable to this dimness of their perceptions, was the whole *Systeme* and *body* of their *Religion,* which rather entertain'd its self in those *external bodily* performances, which affected the *sense,* than in those *Divine* and *Spiritual* raptures, which purified and elevated the *Soul*. 'Tis the *Apostles* affirmation, *Heb.* 9. *that the sacrifices there offered could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining*

pertaining to the conscience, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in *meats and drinks,* and *carnal ordinances.* Alas what propriety had all their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the *Mire* while the body was in the *Laver*: and while the surface of the man was sprinkled with blood, the heart might be more beastial than those creatures who lent the *ablution.* And indeed if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony had proceeded to infect and poyson that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the Negative precepts: so that we see *Christ* is fain to assert the Internal part of the Obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of *vertue* they perform'd were commonly such as had an Aspect, rather on their temporal well-being, than distant and unseen rewards their Justice, and Charity confin'd to their own *Nation,* directed to the flourishing of their own *Common-wealth*: whereas *Aliens* were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were *vertues,* they were rather *Political* than *Moral,* and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on *Earth,* lookt on *secular* plenty and tranquillity as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their *felicity.*

BUT

BUT God has provided, as the *Apostle* says, *Heb.* 11. 40. *better things for us*, has not only made a better Covenant with us, but has *established it upon better promises*, *Cap.* 8. 6. given us clearer revelations, not only of our *duty*, but our *recompence*, the veil in *Christ* is done away, and we all with open face, *Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. The Gospel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, seal'd by his explicite and direct promise, who cannot lye: and that not only engag'd by way of *munificence*, but bargain and contract, as the purchase of that *price*, which our *Redeemer* fully paid in our behalf. And sure this is in the *Apostles* phrase *strong consolation*; and if so, it must be forcible encitement likewise, he cannot but run alacriously, who has the prize in his Eye, nor can S. *Paul* use a more pressing argument to his *Corinthians*, *To be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, than this assurance, *That their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. 15. 58.

AND as this clear proposal of the *promises* is most proper to encourage and inspirit our endeavours, so is the conditionality most efficacious to necessitate and engage them. Had *Heaven* been only promis'd as a largess, and with a blind promiscuous bounty dispenc'd without discrimination, how much it might have rais'd our *gratitude*, I know not, but sure it would not have excited our *industry*, which in all instances we find is whetted by interest: and where that is

otherwise

otherwise secur'd, men generally estimate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the *promises* that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of *good life*; for admit the *joys* we expect never so *Divine* and *Spiritual* for their kind; never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner, yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate, *felicities* which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking to be assur'd 'tis perfectly needless: we have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards *vertue*, that God has so linkt our *hopes* and our *duty* together: and indeed when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the *reward*, with the despicableness of the *service*, we must resolve that he had no other design in making his *promises* conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that *holiness*, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: that it was an artifice of his *love* to ensnare us into two *felicities* by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, *vertue* in passage to *glory*.

AND indeed who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the

the necessity of any other, but God who understands our thoughts, long before, *Psal.* 139. 1. foresaw, that notwithstanding this proposal of a *Canaan*, there would be *Rubenites* and *Gadites*, who would set up their rest on this side of *Jordan*; so intent on the commodity of their Cattle, as to be content themselves to be part of the Herd, and *become like the Beasts that perish*: That there would be men of so ignoble, disingenuous tempers, as none of these cords of a man would be able to draw; and therefore there is another part of the *Gospel-Oeconomy* fitted to their capacities; the *threats* and *interminations*, those terrors of the *Lord*, which as Goads may drive those brutish Creatures who will not be attracted: that those who think themselves perfectly unconcern'd in *Davids* question, *who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord, Psal.* 24. 3. may yet startle at *Esays*, *who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Of so formidable a kind are those menaces, as is sufficient to awake the most drowsie stupid *Soul*, and are most apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: that very sensuality which made them despise *Heaven*, may help to enhanse the dread of *Hell*; the lack of a *drop of water* will be most insupportable to him who fared deliciously every day; those *flames* will be yet more scorching to those bodies, who by studious effeminacies and softness have superadded an artificial tenderness to the natural; nor will the *gnawing of the worm* appear more intolerable to any, than those who here

here make it their business to tye up its *Jaws*, gag or stupifie that *Conscience* which would now admonish, but will there torment. And when to this is added the *perpetuity* of these *pains*, that *the worm shall never die, the fire never be quencht*, certainly this puts such an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the *Apostles* phrase, *quick* and *powerful, searching even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, the joynts and marrow.* When we are assur'd *that the Axe is thus laid unto the root of the tree, and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire*, we shall sure be warn'd *to bring forth meet fruits of repentance, and fly from the wrath to come.*

BUT because neither invitations nor threats can avail with those who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: since the most *glorious prize*, the most formidable danger, is insignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleased God to inspirit and actuate all his *Evangelical* methods, by a concurrence of *supernatural* strength, makes it not only eligible but possible, I may say easie and pleasant for us to do whatever he commands us: and notwithstanding our natural debility, makes us through *Christ* which strengthens us, *able to do all things*: by his Spirit he prevents, assists, restrains, excites, comforts, convinces; gives grace and adds to that the happier largess of a will to use it, and knowledge to discern the want of more: infusing to the *Soul* an ardent thirst of greater powers, and readier means

of

of service, which the performance actuates to greater strengths, and yet enflames to new desires, and more importunate pursuits, whilest God at once bestows and crowns his own donations; still giving unto him that has, till that at last he gives himself; and *grace is swallowed up in glory*. And to assure us of this aid, he has been pleased to oblige himself: descends to the solemnity of a *Pact* and *Covenant*; has indented with us, and constituted it a principle part of the new and everlasting *Covenant made with mankind in the blood of the Son of God, to send the comforter, his Holy Spirit, to be with us till the end of the world,* and do all this. So that the Gospel is at once the assigner of our tasks, and the *Magazeen* of our strength; so much Spirit goes along with that Letter; so much internal grace is annexed to its outward administration, as will to all, who do not resist it, infallibly render it *the power of God to salvation*. For 'tis not the sole priviledge of a S. *Paul,* but the common portion of all *Christians, That Gods grace shall be sufficient for them*; which is sure a more Gospel-like promise, than that it should be too strong for them: so violent and irresistible as to commit a rape upon their *Spirits*; such a mighty wind as drives them headlong upon *duty*. Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the most *incentive* to industry; we see in *Temporals,* too little makes men desperate, and too much careless; and certainly 'twould be the same in *Spirituals*: but now when we have stock enough to set up with, and that too of so improvable

vable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other side no less capable of total decay also, it being given with this express condition, that upon neglect it shall be withdrawn: so that our own sloth may make us *poor*, but nothing else can keep us from being abundantly *rich*: what can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our *Christianity* has placed us, added to the former considerations, will beyond exception or *subterfuge*, evince its perfect *aptitude* and *fitness* for the End to which it was aim'd, *the Planting and nourishing all true Vertue among men*, the introducing the tree of life into the world again, and so forming us a *Paradise* even amidst the briers and thorns of our Exil'd state.

CHAP. II.

The Character of Christian-mens Practice, shewing their multiplied failance both from the rule of that holy profession, and its genuine effect.

AND now who can suspect that a *cause* so rightly dispos'd, should miss of its *effect*? That this so *auspicious Planet* should be counter-influenc't by any *malevolent Star*? Or that what has so many tenures in us, should be finally disseis'd? For, admit we have not the Piety,

to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the *Author*; yet the excellency of its *composition* does so much recommend it to our reason, that we must put off the best part of our *Nature* to evacuate the force of our Religion: nay, supposing us to have done that too, to have struck our selves out of the list of *Rationals*, yet if we keep but the rank of *Animals*, if we have not extinguisht passion and sense, it descends even to them; addresses to our hopes and fears with most importunate solicitations, and convincing motives: So that unless we have the absurd ill luck to have much of the *Stoick*, and nothing of the *Philosopher*, 'twill be impossible to resist its impressions, and sure he that comtemplates *this*, will be apt with some confidence to conclude *Christendom* to be the *Goshen* of the world, not only in respect of its *light*, but of its *immunity* from all those *Locusts* and *Caterpillers*, those swarms of mean and sordid Vices which both cover and devour the rest of the *Earth*.

BUT this must be the inference of a meer *contemplative*, a Recluse that converses only with his own meditations: for let him be so much *secular*, as once to look abroad, the most *transient* glance will serve to unravel all this hopeful *speculation*, & shew him that *Christendom* may be as much *Heathen* as *America*: whereas 'tis usually said, that ill *Manners* produce good Laws, we have reverst the *Aphorism*, and our good *Law* has introduc'd the most corrupt manners. Our holy *faith* which like a foundation should *support* good works,

works, has like a gulf *swallowed* them up. And so universal a depravation is there among us, that we have scarce any thing left to distinguish us from the most barbarous people, but a better name and worse vices.

AND here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be significant enough to express or to bewail, so strange and so perverse degeneration, that the *light* of the *world* should thus darken it: the *salt* of the *Earth* be the means of putrifying and corrupting it: that those who were by God drawn out from the *Heathen* world should so outvie the *Gentiles* crimes, as if they had forsaken them, only because they were too *innocent*. *This* indeed is one of *Satans* subtillest stratagems, to fill Christ's *Camp* thus with his *Souldiers*, by whose intestine treacheries, he has been more *triumphant* than by all his open assaults and avowed hostilities. What a late *States-man* said (*Prophetically*, if we may judge by the event) of *England*, that *it was a vivacious animal that could never dye except it kill'd it self*, is no less true of the *Church*, which has always been *invulnerable* against all *darts*, but what have been taken out of its own *quiver*. Of *this* the *Primitive* times were *pregnant* testimonies, where all the most witty cruelties, the most bloody persecutions, never made any breach in her: but she stood firmer for all those batteries, and like an Arch'd Building, became more strong and compact, by that weight which was design'd to crush her: but the *Vice* of *Professors* undermines her very founda-

tion, and does as much exceed the *destructiveness* of the most hostile assaults, as intestine *treachery* is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign *violence*.

AS long as the *lives* of Christians were the *transcripts* of their doctrine they render'd it venerable to all, and gave a presumption there was something more than *humane* in it, that could work such signal *effects*, that could so transform *men* as to make the *adulterer* chaste, the *drunkard* temperate, the *covetous* liberal, the *contentious* peaceable. *This*, this was the way to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apostle speaks, *Tit.* 2. 10. And then the *rule of contraries* directs us to conclude very distant *effects* from our now so distant *practices*, that our very *religion* should partake of the *infamy* of our lives, and be thought rather a *mystery* of *iniquity* than *godliness*.

THUS is *Christ* wounded in the house of his *friends*, and has more *reproach* cast on him by those that *profess* his name, than by the loudest blasphemies of those that *oppose* it. For when those who have not opportunity to examine our *faith*, see the enormousness of our *works*, what should hinder them from measuring the *Master*, by the *disciples*? it being scarce imaginable that any one *Sect* of men should so universally run counter to all the rules of their profession. For let any *sober* Heathen look upon *Christendom*, as it is at *this day* weltring in the bloud, not of *Martyrdom* but *War*, and will it be possible for him

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to think it owns a Gospel of *Peace*; or that those who so perpetually do those outrages they are unwilling to suffer, profess obedience to the the *Royal Law* of *love thy neighbour as thy self*, Jam. 2. 8. Can he *see* the *violence* and oppressions, the *frauds* and underminings, the busie *scramblings* for little parcels of *Earth*; and yet believe we count our selves *strangers* and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treasure in *Heaven*? Can he *observe* the strange and almost universal distortion of speech, whereby it has lost its native property of being *interpreter* of the mind, and under *intelligible* words so far exhibits the *Babel* confusion, that no man understands anothers meaning? And can he *imagine* we have any such *Precept*, as *lye not one to another*, or any such *penalty* upon the infringer, as *exclusion from the new Jerusalem*? Shall he *hear* our *God* mention'd more frequently and earnestly in our *imprecations* than our *prayers*, and every part of our crucified *Saviour*, recrucified in our horrid *oaths*; and shall he not *think* that his *second* executioners bear him as little reverence as his *first*: or that *he* has given no such *command* as *swear not at all*? When he discerns *self preservation* bow'd to as the *Supreme Law*, can he ever *dream* of another so inconsistent *obligation* as that of *taking up the cross*? Or that *suffering for righteousness sake* is one of our greatest *felicities* when he sees us run so affrighted from it, that no crime, perjury, rebellion, murder, is block enough in our way to stop our flight? In *fine*, when he considers how

much of our business it is, first to excite, and then to cloy the flesh, to spurr it on to riots even beyond its own propensions, that the whole year is but one mad carnival, and we are *voluptuous* not so much upon *desire* or appetite, as by way of *exploit* and bravery: when I say he considers this, can he possibly guess our *institution* directs us to beat down the body, to *mortifie the flesh with the affections and lusts*, interdicts us all *rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness*, and *all provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*. Certainly all rules of discourse will direct him to the quite contrary conclusion. And when he sees a Set of men that have enhans'd the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their Principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that supposal he wanted not temptation to his Option that said, *Let my soul be with the Philosophers*.

AND while we thus misrepresent our holy profession to *others*, it will be no wonder if we finally do it to *our selves*, that we forget its *native shape*, and look on her only in the *ugly dress* our selves have put on, and that effect seems already too visible among us: our lives have so long confuted it that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like *Amnon* loath it because we have ravisht and defil'd it. Many of us take notice of the better Morals of *Turks* and *Infidels* not in reproach of our selves but our Religion, and because we have so many *Lepers*, think *Abanah* and *Pharphar*, better than all the waters of *Israel*, this

this is openly in the *mouths* of many, but is so prodigiously *irrational* as well as *unjust*, that one can scarce think it possible to be in their *hearts*, unless they be pursued by the fate of habitual lyars, that at last come to perswade themselves.

CERTAINLY there is no other parallel instance wherein men conclude so perversely: he that shews a man that precipice upon whose brink he stands, that intreats, yea importunes him to retire from the *danger*; nay bribes him with the greatest rewards to chuse *safety*, has done all that can be expected from a friend, or charitable man: and if after all, the wretched person so advis'd, shall cast himself headlong upon ruine; assuredly no *Inquest* would return his murder in any other *form* than that of *Felo de se*. And why then should our Christianity be accus'd of those ills which it would infallibly avert, if our obstinacy would permit it: indeed the charge is so wilde, that it seems rather design'd as an artifice of diversion, a sprout of that first fig-tree which was to hide the nakedness of lapsed *Adam*. Men think it policy to transfer their guilts, and are willing, the *violence* of their lusts should pass for the *impotence* of their religion. Like irregular *patients* blaming their *Physician* for those ill accidents which they know owing only to their own unrulineſs. A pregnant testimony of the reproachful nature of sin, that men are content to betake themselves to the most forlorn shifts to avoid the owning it: but the

consciousness is so pressing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages: 'tis not enough for men to decry their *Christianity* as a feeble *insignificant* thing, but they load it even with contradictory *imputations*, and that which sometimes they call *the foolishness of preaching*, to bring it in scorn and contempt, , shall at another be stiled an *Art* and *trick* to bring it into suspicion and hatred, be arraign'd for imposture and deceit, a project of imposing upon credulous souls, and gaining real advantages to the managers while they feed the silly *Proselyte* with imaginary ones. How groundless a calumny this is, as it appears from the sanctity, and eminent simplicity of Christian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falshood; so also from the designments and aims of its first promulgators, who as they can not be suppos'd dextrous enough to lay such a scene of taking Pageantry; so all their visible acquests were scourgings and imprisonments, persecutions and death. If this were the case it would indeed go near to reconcile the before mention'd contradictory *imputations*, whilst the imposing upon credulous souls at this dear rate, would be in very deed *the foolishness of Preaching*, the greatest madness in the world. Men of common reason would be asham'd to use such frivolous cavils: but who can without horror hear them from profest Christians? that while *Infidels* are modest in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, *Disciples* should be bitter and charge it as insidious and

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treacherous. Thus does the *Church* experiment the truth of her blessed *Lords Predictions,* and finds her *foes are those of her own house*: and though she be Christs *Dove,* yet is subjected to the fate of the *Viper,* and has her bowels torn out by those that spring from them.

THESE are the growing consequences of *resolute impiety,* he who will not be kept within the bounds of *duty,* seldom contents himself with that bare violation: he not only *breaks the bonds in sunder,* but *casts them away* too; is impatient they should keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has rob'd them of the power of restraining him: and *this* sure is the bottom of all that deep reasoning, by which men have learnt to argue themselves and others out of their *Creed*: And though this be indeed the great *Arcanum* the *Philosophers Stone* they aim at; yet they have met with another good experiment by the way: and have, by I know not what *Chimistry,* extracted a reputation out of these most unapt *materials.* He passes for a considering man that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his *reason* that least owns his *faith*: and then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus creditable.

Indeed Satan is too subtle a manager to lose this advantage, and the event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees.

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The *voluptuary* who *likes* his portion in this world, and *fears* that in another, is at first only prompted by his interest to quarrel the *last Articles* of the *Creed*, and so in his own defence denies the *life everlasting*: but when he finds his necessity made a vertue, and himself struck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will encrease with his irreligion, and so proceeds still to unravel farther, till at last he leaves not so much as *I believe in God*, that many have advanc'd so far is too evident: and by some so own'd that they will not thank his charity, that shall hope better of them.

'TWAS once the *triumph* of infant Christianity, that it silenc'd all the *Heathen Oracles*, and within a while demolish'd even the *Synagogue* too: but alas its mature age gives us that effect in a most inverted sense, it now has serv'd to suppress even the common notions of a *Deity*, turn'd out the *one* as well as the *many* Gods, and instead of *Polytheists* and *Idolaters* has made *Atheists*, and *that* which Christ tells us was design'd *to perfect and fill up the Law*, has by the strange pravity of its professors at once obliterated both *Law* and *Law-giver* out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old Axiom, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; and the Saint as well as the *Angel*, if he desert his innocence, commences Feind and *Devil*. These are such sad, such direful transmutations as excite not so much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and what

what rivers, what Oceans of Tears are competent to bewail such unutterable evils.

THE removal of the *Candlestick* is so formidable a *judgement* that the threatning of it, is us'd by Christ as the most awaking menace to the Seven Churches *Revel.* 2. 3. but the removing it by our own hands is yet an enhansment of that highest calamity; when men are come to such an insensate obduration, that they court their *Plagues*, become their own *Lictors* and make that their *choice* which is their extremest *punishment*, they are certainly too secure of that ruine they call for; And may we not fear it may prove *general*, and involve us all: that while so *many* cry out to be deliver'd from their Christianity as their load and pressure, and so *few* express their dissent to that demand: God may in judgment grant it, hearken to those that cry loudest, rescue his Gospel from our profane and impious violations and give it to others that may bring forth the fruits of it.

NOR is this to be fear'd only from the *explicite* importunities of the blasphemous, for it is interpretatively the vote of many others; whoever give themselves up to the dominion of any lust, do *implicitly* renounce their obedience to Christ, and say *we will not have this man to rule over us.* And when he is thus depos'd from his *regal* and directive power, we have reason to believe he will despise a meer *titular* soveraignty, not suffer the Scepter of his Word to remain as an Empty *Ceremony* among those, who pay it no real

real obedience: nor be again cloath'd with Purple, crown'd, and saluted King to advance the triumph of his scorn and crucifixion.

Nor will the fawning Professions of the demure hypocrite *avert*, but *accelerate* this Fate: He that makes the *Golden Scepter* in Christs hand, a *rod of iron* in his own, that thinks his *Saintship* licenses him to all the severe censures, and the yet severer (because more effective) *oppressions* of others, he is certainly to be lookt on not only as a Rebel, but an Usurper too, and is of all others the highest provoker. He that *tramples* under foot the Son of God, does not so much violate him, as he that *pretends* to erect him a Throne upon bloud and rapine, on perjury and sacriledge: nor does he that accounts the Bloud of the *Covenant* an *unholy* thing, so much profane it, as he that uses it as a *Varnish* to paint over his foulest lusts. The Apostle has long since told us, *there is no concord between Christ and Belial*, and can we think he will be patient thus to be made subservient to his enemy: or suffer his *Ark* to be set for the *support*, which should be the *confusion* of *Dagon*. Do we find him so severely upbraid the hypocrisie of the *Jews*, that *stole, murdered, committed adultery, and swore falsly, and yet came and stood before him in his house*, Jer. 7. 9. and shall we hope he will connive at it in Christians? Was it intolerable profanation in them to *account* his house a den of robbers, and shall we be permitted to *make* it so: they are sent to *Shiloh* to read their own

own destiny, and surely we are as likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of those advantages which we have so unworthily abus'd: nor can we expect, that though God cause the natural *Sun to rise still as well on the evil as the good,* yet that the *Sun of righteousness* shall continue to shine on those who will only bask themselves in his Rays, grow *Æthiops* from his *neighbourhood*; but will not work by his *light.*

WHEN all this is consider'd, what a sad abode does it make? When the *blasphemies* of the Profane, the *sensualities* of the Voluptuous, and the *mockeries* of the Hypocrite, send, as it were, daily challenges to Heaven, we cannot but look it should at last *overcome* its long-suffering, *awake* God to vindicate the honour of his Name, and not suffer it any longer to be thus prostituted and polluted: that when he sees his light serve only to aid us the more subtilly to contrive our deeds of darkness, he should withdraw it, smite us with blindness like the *Sodomites,* whom he finds in such impure pursuits: and were that *blindness* such as our Saviour speaks of, *Jo.* 9. 41. that inferr'd the *no sin,* 'twere a desirable infliction, but alas it has none of that property: That which is design'd for the punishment can never be the extenuation of our guilt; but as in Hell there is an happy Separation of *effects,* the scorching of the *flame* without the light, and the blackness of *night* without the rest: so in this neareſt approach to it; this Portal to those Chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuse,

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the darkness divested of its native quality of hiding: and when we are enter'd among *Heathens* here, we must yet expect the sadder portion of *Apostatiz'd* Christians hereafter.

AND O that this *consideration* might at last have its proper *operation,* rouse and awake us timely to prevent those evils which it will be impossible to cure. That by bringing forth some more *genuine* and kindly fruits, we may avert that *dismal* sentence, *Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground.* That men would generally lay to heart both the *sin* and infamy of being *promoters of publick ruine*; and quench that *fire* with their tears which their sins have kindled, that the fasting and prayers, the sighs and groans of the *Primitive* Christians may supplant the profane luxuries, the carnal Jollities of the *Modern*: and that Sackcloth and Ashes may become the *universal mode,* the only *fashionable* dress among us. *This* both Reason and Religion suggest as matter of our most importunate wishes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant.

BUT the *less appearance* there is of this universal reformation, the *more jealously* ought every single person to look on himself, lest he be one that obstruct it: for so he does who stays till it be a *fashion,* but neglects to contribute his part to the making it so. Men are willing to discourage themselves from attempts of this kind, and with an unseasonable modesty can reflect what a nothing one man is to so many millions, when alas all that vast Empire Vice has got in the world,

world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, & would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable Collection would be, that he who considers himself but as *one*, should not suffer himself to grow into *less*; to fall from that *Unit* to a *Cypher*, by permitting sloth or cowardize to enfeeble and Emasculate him, but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that *utmost* is but a *little*.

AND to this certainly there want not encouragements, we see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a *single* courage being exerted has often without *Romance*, overcome *giantly* difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon vertue by the pusillanimity of those that *like*, but dare not *abet* her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the *one* is contagious, but the *other* has no means to diffuse its self. Would men stoutly own *duty*, and not like *Peter*, *follow Christ afar off*, they might yet hope to make a party and *gain ground* in the world. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a *lost field*: and methinks those who have any *warmth* of Piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a *flame*, ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει τὴν ἀρετὴν, *adde to their faith vertue*, as that signifies *courage*: and then readily would succeed, that train of Christian excellencies reckon'd up by St.

St. *Peter*, 2 *Ep.* 1. 5. *knowledge, temperance, patience, godlineſs*, and ſuperſtruct on theſe, as it there follows, *brotherly kindneſs*, and the moſt comprehenſive *charity*. We ſhould be not only devout towards *God*, but zealous towards *Men*, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of thoſe ſnares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And ſince among all thoſe ſnares there is none more entangling, than the creditableneſs and repute of cuſtomary vices, to ſet themſelves eſpecially againſt that overgrown covering and ornament; thoſe *Locks* wherein its great, its *Sampſon-like ſtrength* lies: and ſtrive to render it as contemn'd as it is baſe: and to this purpoſe nothing is ſo apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching vertue out of the Dungeon, that darkneſs and obſcurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illuſtriouſly viſible in their *own* practice, put it into the poſſibility of attracting *others*. Indeed there only it appears in its true ſplendor, they are but dead colours the Sublimeſt ſpeculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, muſt imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious perſon may, nay ought to be a *Noah*, a preacher of righteouſneſs: and if it be his fortune to have as imperſwaſible an Auditory, if he cannot avert the *deluge*, it will yet be the providing himſelf an *Ark*, the delivering, yea advancing his *own ſoul*, if he cannot benefit *other mens*.

NAY, this being a *Noah* may qualifie him to be a *Moſes* too, give him ſuch an *intereſt* with Heaven,

Heaven, that he may be fit to stand in the gap, to be an *intercessor* and Mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that *office*: nor any part of this more than our sinful Nation, which having long been in the *furnace*, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of *refining*; but upon that more infallible and fatal one of *consuming* us. This is so dreadful, but withal so just an expectation, that if there be any *Jacobs* among us; any, *who can wrestle and prevail with God*, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it, vigorously undertake this pious work, let no *Moses's* hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity, let them transcribe that holy Oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a *what wilt thou do to thy great Name*, and when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance, ransack Gods *bosom*, rifle his *bowels* for arguments of *compassion*, repeat to him his own *titles*, that he is *long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*, *Numb.* 14. 18. And by these solicite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession? What *strong* cries must they be that shall drown so *loud* a clamor of impieties. And how does it reproach the slightness of our sleepy heartless addresses? Can we hope to bind Gods hands

with Withs and Straws? To arrest his vengeance with such faint and feeble assaults? And when *nature* and *danger* suggest to Heathen *Nineveh*, not *only* to cry, but cry *mightily* to God, shall the superaddition of our Religion damp ours into a *whisper*, a soft *unaudible* sound. A storm will teach the profane Mariner to pray in earnest, and alas, we have not wanted that discipline. 'Tis not long since we might have said with those, *Acts* 27. *No small tempest has long lain on us, neither Sun nor Stars in many days*, nay in many *years appearing*, nothing but black and dismal portents of a final *wreck* to a poor *weather-beaten Church*, and then sure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn so much of instruction from the waves that tossed us, as to make our prayers keep pace with them, in swift uninterrupted succession, in loud and not to be resisted violence. That we did so *then* I dare not affirm, but sure I am the necessity of it is not *yet* out-dated; for though the Sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it, though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, should not break out in tempest, and bring shipwrack to us; yet we too fully exemplifie the truth of the *Prophets* Axiome, *That the wicked are like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest*: we have *within* us a principle of ruine, which can operate though nothing from *without* excite it. A tempest is not always necessary to sink a Ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greatest calm, and what security can there then be to our torn Vessel, whose rents our continued divisions do

do ſtill keep open. Indeed our *preſervation* muſt be as our *reſtoration* was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us addreſs with St. *Peters* pathetick Prayer, *Save Lord or we periſh.* O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that Petition, would qualifie themſelves to preſent it. Lift up ſuch pure hands, *that God who hears not ſinners, Jo. 9.* may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an anſwer of *Peace.*

CHAP. III.

A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Inconſideration.

THE laſt Section having defeated all the promiſing hopes of the former, by ſhewing us how ſadly we have fruſtrated all the deſigns and engagements of our profeſſion, enervated all thoſe apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our *practices* are to our *rules,* mere curioſity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden *cauſes* of thoſe ſo ſtrange *effects,* what unhappy propriety there is in the *ſoil,* that after ſo much *culture* and husbandry it ſhould produce nothing but *wild* Grapes: and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted thoſe blows which were aim'd at him. But as in *diſeaſes* the *pains* and

languiſhings are obvious to the groſſeſt ſenſe, but the *ſprings* and originals of them moſt frequently lye deep, and are ſo complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to ſearch and to diſtinguiſh them: nay, do often mock the moſt ſubtile inquiſitor, and ſend him back with meer conjectures and uncertain gueſſes: ſo in this *Epidemick* Spiritual diſtemper, the *malady* is notorious and viſible, but the *cauſes* of it not ſo eaſily determin'd, yet that not ſo much from the darkneſs as the number of them; ſo many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monſtrous birth, that a *Solomon* himſelf muſt have made the propoſal of dividing it, as not being able to have aſſign'd it entire to any one Mother.

INDEED ſo many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I ſhall not therefore undertake any ſuch *exact* enumeration, but ſhall only take notice of thoſe which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the moſt *eminent*.

AND firſt the great and ſtupid *Inconſideration* which moſt men have concerning their Religion, may well paſs for a main cauſe of its fruſtration. *Chriſtianity* may make *Archimedes* his *challenge*, give it but where it may ſet its foot, allow but a ſober advertence to its propoſals, and it will move the whole *world*: it comes with moſt invincible and controuling arguments, but ſtill they are arguments, and thoſe muſt firſt obtain

attention,

attention, before they can force *aſſent*; they will moſt infallibly weigh down the *ſcales,* though the whole world were the *counter-balance,* but then that muſt preſuppoſe their being put into thoſe Scales: being entertain'd with ſo much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they addreſs to us as men, that is *creatures* endued by God, with *rational* Souls and diſcurſive faculties, but if we will ſuppreſs theſe, and ſet up only the *brute* to give audience, we muſt not expect *Balaams* prodigy ſhall be every day repeated, that the *beaſt* ſhould be wiſer than the *rider,* and conſequently cannot wonder if the Succeſs vary with the Auditors.

AND 'tis to be fear'd, this is the ſtate of moſt of us, that all the convincing *Logick,* that *demonſtration of the Spirit,* as St. *Paul* calls it: and all the perſwaſive *Rhetorick* of the Goſpel, find us ſo ſtupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impreſſion: all the *avenues* are ſo blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the *Indian* Serpents *Philoſtratus* mentions, proof againſt all charms, but ſuch as with their glittering ſplendor aſſault our Eyes: nothing moves us but what courts our Senſes, and what is not *groſs enough* to be ſeen, we think *too nice* to be conſider'd. The form and name of Chriſtianity men find ready to their hands, and it coſts them no labour to put it on: but ſhould they be interrogated of the import and ſignificancy of it, I fear many would be at a loſs what to anſwer. Men call themſelves *Chriſtians*

as they do *French* or *Engliſh*, only becauſe they were born within ſuch a territory, take up their *Religion* as a part of their *fate*, the temper of their *Climate*, the entail of their *Anceſtors*, or any thing moſt remote from their choice, the profeſſion of it deſcends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careleſs Heirs, they never are at the charge to ſurvey it, to inform themſelves either of the Iſſues, or Revenues of it; what burdens it lays or what advantages it promiſes. Every man ſees they are vaſt multitudes that have entered the *Baptiſmal* vow, and I fear no ſmall numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they ſhould *perform* it, as they did when they *made* it. Have no other notion of *Baptiſm*, but as a *cuſtom* of the place, or a *time* of feſtivity: conſider no farther ſignificancy in theſe ſpiritual bands, than they do in the Swadling-cloaths of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them *Chriſts livery*, than why they wear ſuch *garments* as the *common faſhion* of their Country preſcribes them.

THIS is in many the effect of groſs ignorance, that really know nothing that borders upon Religion: and where that is the *principle*, we cannot think it ſtrange to ſee their *practices* proportionable; this returns them into the ſtate of *Heatheniſm*, and while they walk in that darkneſs, it is no wonder if they often fall: the only matter of admiration is, that there ſhould be any ſuch darkneſs among us; that *the glorious light*, as St. *Paul* terms it, *of the Goſpel of Chriſt*, ſhould not

not long ere this have diſpell'd it out of our *Horizon*, and certainly that it has not, muſt be owing to ſome very great guilt, ſo that concerning ſuch perſons the Diſciples queſtion, *Jo.* 9. is very pertinent, *Who did ſin, this man or his Parents?* Where men are ſo ignorant it muſt neceſſarily infer their *Parents* negligence in infuſing, or their *own* ſtubborn perveſeneſs in reſiſting inſtruction, but 'tis more probable to conclude the former, ſince if Children were early inſtituted, knowledge would inſenſibly inſinuate its ſelf, before their years had arm'd them with obſtinacy enough to make head againſt it: but when by the Parents remiſneſs the proper Seeds-time is loſt; the ſoil grows ſtiffe and untractable; the *labour* of learning averts their Childhood, and the *ſhame* of it their Manhood, and ſo they grow old in their ignorance, are ready to *leave* this world before they come to *know* any thing of that which is to ſucceed it. This is a *common*, but certainly a moſt *deplorable* caſe, and as it loudly accuſes thoſe Parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their Childrens greateſt concernments, ſo certainly it reflects not very laudably upon thoſe, who by ſlighting that excellent Order of *Confirmation* in this Church, have beſides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reſerve, which the care of their *Spiritual* Parent, had provided to repair the negligence of their *Natural*; but guilt has a miſerable kind of infinity, and leſſens not by being communicated; and therefore though theſe unknowing perſons may with juſtice enough

accuſe others, yet can they never the more *abſolve* themſelves. Indeed they cannot tax others omiſſions towards them, without a tacite reproach of their own: for if it were a fault in the *Parent*, to let their infancy want thoſe neceſſary infuſions, 'tis ſurely ſo in *themſelves*, to let their riper years continue in that deſtitution. And ſure 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the *former*, than that which prevails with the *later*; to wit, the fear of ſhame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies ſtupidly under his want, than he that induſtriouſly ſets to cure it: ſo that while they go thus prepoſterouſly to *avert* reproach, they *invite* it; nay, and do beſides betray one of their moſt important ſecrets, diſcover themſelves more ſolicitous about *appearances* than *realities*; to be *thought* knowing than to *be* ſo. A ſtrange kind of *ſpeculative* Hypocriſie, which yet leads to all the *practical* profaneneſs incident to thoſe, *who live without God in the world.*

BUT would God the unchatechiz'd were the only perſons we had to complain of in this matter: There is another ſort as *ignorant*, who have not that plea; who by a wretchleſs *Inconſideration*, have made a ſhift to *unlearn* what they had once been *taught*. That this is naturally very poſſible no man can queſtion, that obſerves how *deſuetude* will rob a man of any Science, or other habit. But in this caſe there is yet a farther concurrent towards it, Chriſts parable tells us of *Fowles that devoured the Seed*, which himſelf interprets to be the

the *wicked one*, which catcheth away the word ſow'n in mens hearts: When that ſpiritual ſeed lies looſe and ſcatter'd upon the ſurface, and is not by deep and ſerious meditation, harrowed as it were into the ground, it offers it ſelf a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the *event* is too ready to atteſt the *truth* of the obſervation: For do we not ſee *many* whoſe childhoods have wanted nothing of Chriſtian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them *wiſe unto ſalvation*, yet ſuffer their manhood to wear out and obliterate all thoſe *rudiments* of their youth; and that not only out of their *practice*, but even out of their *memory* too: this (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found too true in divers, and they would appear leſs able to approve themſelves not only to the *Confeſſor*, but even to the *Catechiſt* in their *adult age*, than they were in their *Minority*: as having ſcarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, ſince they conn'd them to avoid correction; and then 'tis no wonder if they paſs into the ſame *forgetfulneſs* with other the occurrences of that *ſlippery* age.

BUT if with ſome the *memory* have been ſo invincibly *faithful*, as not to have reſign'd its *depoſitum*: if it do happen obſtinately to retain thoſe early impreſſions which were made on it. Yet alaſs that alone will be of little avail: 'tis true that is the ſtore-houſe, and 'tis good to have that well repleniſht; but if its *plenty* be only within its ſelf uncommunicated, if the *granary*

nary though never ſo full, be ſeal'd up, it gives no ſecurity againſt a *famine*: a mans remembrance of his *Creed* may tell him there is a *God*, and that he is Almighty; but if his reaſon be ſo much a ſleep, as not to inferr from thence the neceſſity of reverencing and obeying him who is all powerful to revenge our contempts: he may repeat the *Article* every day and yet never the leſs *Atheiſtically*. In like manner he may go on to the Birth, Death, and Reſurrection of Chriſt, but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty which devolve on him from thence he may remember his *Birth*, and yet never be *regenerate*: his *Death*, and yet not *dye to ſin*: and his *Reſurrection*, and yet *lie rotting* in his own *corruption*, and not riſe with him to *newneſs of life*. So he may proceed to his *coming to Judge the quick and the dead*, but if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it, if he conſider not that *for every the ſecreteſt thing*, Eccl. 11. *God will bring him*, as well as others *to judgment*: he may talk of *Dooms-day* as men do of ſuch *Aſſizes* as they have no trial at, but it will never ſet him a trembling, or give him the providence to anticipate his ſentence; ſo judge himſelf here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And ſo proportionably in all the parts of our Chriſtian Faith: he that does not extract from them their proper and juſt inferences, ſhall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent *Syſteme*, a moſt infallible *Catholicon*, againſt all his ſpiritual Maladies, but 'tis a Medicine, not a Charm;

Charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in *application*, he will as certainly miss of the *cure*: and this gives us one too clear a reason, why *so many*, in the most fatal sense, *are weak and sick among us, and faln asleep*; are first *lethargick*, and then stark *dead in trespasses and sins*. Men do not by sober consideration suck out the vertue which would heal them: they look on the Creed as *Christs badge*, and so long as they bear that they think none must question their *Christianity*: whereas 'tis indeed more properly his Military *Symbolum*, or recognition of the cause, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and constancy of resolute souldiers: and to this purpose it is that we *stand up* at the recital of the Creed, as owing our Baptismal promise to *fight* manfully under our Saviours *Banner* against *Sin*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material what professions we make, we are the same desertors whether we *stay* in our own Camp, or *run* over to the enemies; *throw away* our Arms, or *not use* them; *renounce* our Christian faith, or not *improve* it. Sloth is as mischievous in war as treachery or cowardize, and he that keeps his *sword* in the *sheath*, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings *none* into the *field*.

AND how many such insignificant *combatants* are there in the Christian Camp: that only lend their *Names* to fill up the *Muster-roll*: but never dream of going upon *service*. 'Tis certain

certain there are as many ſuch, as there are careleſs unconſidering Profeſſors: and theſe 'tis to be fear'd make ſo great a number, that were the Church put to eſtimate her *forces*, and examine what effectively her *ſtrength* is, ſhe would find the deceit of *falſe muſters* as great among the *Spiritual* as the *Civil* Souldiery. It is indeed a moſt amazing thing to ſee, that that which is the one great and important intereſt of all men, ſhould of all other things meet with the leaſt regard. If we make a propoſal of worldly profit, though incumbred with many difficulties and liable to many uncertainties, we ſhall not only have an attentive hearing, but active care and diligent purſuit of the deſign, it will be driven to the laſt glimpſe of hope and if the firſt attempt miſcarry, the next occaſion is laid hold of; but here where the *prize* is ſo rich, the *conditions* ſo eaſie, the *acqueſt* ſo certain, yet (as if theſe were deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got to take the matter into our deliberation. Alas, what ſtupid folly has poſſeſt men? and by what *meaſures* do they make their *eſtimates*? how are their precious Souls become ſo vile in their eyes, that they are the only part of them, which they think below their regard? In an *Epidemick* diſeaſe every man looks out for *Antidote* or Medicine for his own peculiar, and does not acquieſce in that ſilly confidence that he ſhall do as well as other men: yet in this greater danger, that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as cheerful as if they had the moſt ſolid grounds of

ſecurity,

ſecurity. Alas, can numbers *out-face* damnation, or do men hope that by going in troops to hell they ſhall *maſter* the native inhabitants, *ſubdue* thoſe legions of tormentors, and become *conquerors* in ſtead of *ſufferers*? This is ſure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more ſober one can any pretend, in favour of ſo ſtupendous an improvidence?

BUT 'twill be much more ſeaſonable to *reform* than *Apologize* or *Rhetoricate*; and therefore 'twill import thoſe men, who like the inhabitants of *Laiſh*, dwell *careleſs*, quiet, and ſecure, to look about them: to enter into *ſerious* conſultation how they may avert that ruine which waits upon ſuch a ſupine temper, not to ſuffer themſelves to periſh in the midſt of ſuch poſſibilities, nay ſolicitations to be ſaved: but at laſt afford an audience to that Embaſſie which is ſent them from Heaven. Ponder well thoſe *eaſie* terms of reconciliation which are propos'd: the *ineſtimable advantages* conſequent to the embracing that amity; and the as *ineſtimable detriment* of refuſing it: in a word, not to pleaſe themſelves with the *empty title*, but to penetrate the *full purport* and ſignificancy of their Chriſtianity, and when they have done this ſoberly and attentively: having removed this firſt and moſt general obſtruction to piety, they will find themſelves aſſaulted by ſuch force of *reaſon* that they muſt either be very ill *Logicians*, or very good *Chriſtians*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Conſideration.

NEXT to the *ſtupid* and meerly vegetable ſtate of total incogitancy: we may rank that *partial* and peece-meal conſideration, by which Chriſtianity is mutilated and deform'd, depriv'd of all its force to attract and ſubdue mens hearts: for as in *artificial* Movements, there is ſuch a dependance of one part upon another, that the ſubſtracting of any one deſtroys the whole frame: ſo in this *ſpiritual* Machin deſign'd to raiſe our dull mortality to heaven; the divine wiſdom of its maker has combin'd its ſeveral parts, that he who ſevers ruines, he that applies it not in its united ſtrength will find no aid from its unjoynted ſcattered particles. S. *Paul* tells us 1 *Cor.* 12. that in the natural body the making it all Eye, or Hand, the reducing the many members to one is deſtructive to its being (if they were all one member where were the body *v.* 20.) and we in reaſon muſt expect the ſame event will follow here. If we advance one part of our Chriſtian Faith to the annihilation of the reſt, 'tis impoſſible that ſhould ſupply the place of the whole; but the more that member is ſwoln above its native ſize, the more *unwildy*, not the more *ſtrong* it grows: and loſes that active vigor, which

which it receiv'd by a social communication with the other parts.

'TIS Gods charge against the *Priests, Mal,* 2. that *they have been partial in the Law,* נְשֹׂאִים פָּנִים lifters up of faces in it; preferr'd *some* more agreeable parts, and discountenanc'd *others*; were not *only* judges of the Law, but *unjust* judges too. And I fear the enditement may now run more generally against the People also; that they have been partial in the Gospel: culled and chosen out those softer and more gentle dictates which should less grate and disturb them: like well the *Oil* that makes them have a cheerful countenance, but are not so forward to deal with the *Wine* which should search and cleanse their sores. We make all our addresses to the *promises,* hug and cares them, and in the interim let the *commands* stand by neglected. A *divinity* indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of *these times,* which loves to make an *offering to God of that which costs them nothing,* and yields a preference to that way of *worship* which assures Salvation *best cheap,* and at the *easiest terms*; but would men consider, they would find, that the *commands* are the supreme and most eminent part of the *Evangelical Covenant,* the *promises* come but as *hand-maids* and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more respectful entertainment, and it should be remembred that of this *sort* are the *threatnings* too; and therefore they have surely an equal right to our regard especially when many of them have the accession of

of Gods *Oath*, to bind and ſtrengthen their *performance*. And what a ſcandalous and abſurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this ſolemnity the more to command our reverence, we ſingle out this one part of the Train and pay our homage unto it; lay hold on the *Promiſes*, not thoſe that ſpeak *damnation* to impenitence, but the other half of them which give *aſſurances* of favour. And like the *Benjamites* to the daughters of *Shiloh*, run away with them, poſſeſs our ſelves of theſe by rape, in ſpight of all the incapacities we lye under; though God has ſworn, that no diſobedient provoker, ſhall enter into his reſt.

THAT this is really the caſe of many is more than probable, for by what other artifice is it poſſible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying, their confident expectations of heaven, with their greedy rapacious purſuits of Earth: their ſecure dependance on the Bloud of their *Saviour* with their remorſleſs effuſions of that of their *Brethren*? did they conſider the inſeparable *connexion* between the Precepts and the Promiſes, 'twere hard for them to be ſo *wicked*, but impoſſible to be ſo *ſanguine*. Did the *unclean* perſon believe that none but *the pure in heart ſhall ſee God*, if he could be ſo much *Swine*, as ſtill to chuſe the *mire*: yet ſure he could not expect to be Rapt from thence into heaven. Did the *Drunkard* conſider the ſentence of the Apoſtle *excluding all ſuch from the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 10. if he can be content ſo ſadly to

to oberbuy his sin; as to pay that Kingdom for his shot: yet certainly even he cannot be sot enough to expect the possession of what he has so sold, or hope that from one of his drunken *trances,* he shall *awake* to *glory*: did the *Covetous* extortioner observe that he is involv'd in the same sentence, remember that such Violents *shall take* not *heaven,* but hell, *by force*; if the terrors of the Lord could not have force enough to melt his bowels, to unclutch his griping hand, or dissieze him of his prey: yet sure it must discourage him from grasping of heaven too, from hoping to defraud *God* as he has done *men,* and striking himself into an estate in the land of the living: and in like manner all other hoping sinners if they would ruine, yet must cease from flattering themselves, must chuse *damnation* bare-faced, and not fancy that their posting on in the broad way shall ever bring them to *life.* And sure this discovery of their estate, were a very good step to the curing it: for though 'tis possible some few may be of so *sturdy* an impiety as to chuse their *sin* with all its consequents, yet sure all sinners are not of that strong complexion, and therefore *Satan* is put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to *hoodwink* those that are apt to *start*: and disguises the danger when he sees the true appearance of it will terrifie and avert. This was his *old* policy with our *first* parents; he dazles their eyes with the *glorious* but *abusive* proposal of becoming like *Gods,* that they might not discern how near they were approaching to become like *Devils*: and

this under the pretence of confidence and friendſhip, diſcovering as it were a ſecret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindneſs was ſolicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind, *in Maſſa* had been too ſlight a *Trophey* for that one Stratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, perſwades men that the path of obedience which God has chalkt out is ſtrait, and narrow, rugged and incumbred; that there is a ſhorter cut, an eaſier paſſage to life: that they may be led into *Canaan* a nearer way, ſtep into it immediately from the fleſh pots of *Egypt*, and ſcape the tedious weary March in the Wilderneſs: never ſo much as call at Mount *Sinai*, or be affrighted with the *Thunders* of *the Law*. In a word, they need not *work out their Salvation*, but be they never ſo ſlothful *they may inherit the promiſes*, Heb. 6. 12. this is his one grand *Concluſion*, though he has ſeveral *mediums* to infer it by: wherewith as with ſo many *tools* and Engines he furniſhes men for the *filing* or breaking of that ſacred link between duty and reward; and of theſe he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of thoſe that manage them. I ſhall not undertake to ranſack his *workhouſe*, or give an inventory of his *utenſils*, but ſhall rather in general beſeech all thoſe, who have made this unhappy ſeparation to remember from whoſe *Forge* they took their *Inſtruments*: and then conſider whether his officiouſneſs in ſupplying them, can argue any thing but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that he

he whose eternal pastime it will be to torment men, can really be solicitous of their ease that he would chuse out for them the *pleasantest paths*, were it not that he knows they lead to the *chambers of death*? when *Christ* whose sole business it was to save mens souls, has prescrib'd us a *course* which shall assuredly conduct us unto *happiness*, what can it be but phrensie to resort to *Abaddon*, the destroyer for an easier *method*, or expect more *gentleness* and compassion from the *roaring Lion* than from the *Lamb of God*.

NAY indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderness, but fidelity too: to believe him in opposition to all the express affirmations of God; and when he who is truth its self has told us, that *except we repent we shall all perish*, Luk. 13. 5. and that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, Heb. 12. 14. to disbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious composition of blasphemy and folly: a strange contumely to *God*, but fatal treachery to our *selves*: For alas Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of *Leger de main*, and as *Juglers* make us believe we have cut the *string*, which yet presently after they shew us *whole*: so he perswades us he has thus sever'd the *Condition* from the *Promises*, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was *inviolable*. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverse the immutable divine Law, we may, 'tis true, delude our selves, keep up our spirits high; in a secure jollity *eat*

and drink, and riſe up to play, and ſo not only loyter, but revel out our *day,* till the *night* overtake us *wherein no man can work,* but we ſhall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us, to perſwade God to pay the *hire* to thoſe that have been no labourers, or give the *prize* to any who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a juſt tenderneſs to his own Soul, ſtrictly examine his hopes, try not how *high* they towre, but how *deep* they are founded; whether on the *ſand* or on the *rock*; the flattering deluſions of Satan, and the dreams of his own Phancy, or on the Promiſes of God: for though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of fooliſh *Architects* there are, which miſtake their ground, take that for aſſurance that is not: and this truly is a thing deſerves to be ſoberly conſider'd, they that moſt greedily catch at the Promiſes, do often embrace a *cloud* inſtead of the *Deity* which they ſo eagerly graſp, and thereby think to enjoy. But *faithful* obedience, and not *inſolent* hopes, commend us unto God. The Goſpel indeed deſcribes to us great and ineſtimable *felicities,* but he that can think this gives him *Title* to them, may as well pretend to the whole *World,* becauſe he has the *Map* of it in his houſe: for though it mentions them to all, yet it promiſes them to none but the obedient. And thoſe *Iſraelites* which fled from the ſight of *Goliah,* 1 *Sam.* 17. 25. might as reaſonably challenge the reward propos'd to the victor, as men can pretend to

to enter into life without keeping the Commandments: this then is the one *Criterion*, by which a man may judge of his hopes; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and such as will not make him asham'd, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himself the comfort of hoping as much as he can too. But if his *hopes* exceed this measure, and square themselves only by his *wishes*; if he look for Heaven, not because he is *qualified* for it, but because he wants or *covets* it; this is rather to dream than hope, and such *whimsies* will as soon invest the begger in *wealth*, the defam'd in *honour*, the sick in *health*, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compass *Heaven* for the bold *Fiduciary*.

IT is indeed like those *Lunacies* wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to those Kingdoms, they know nothing more of, than the names: and sure the Analogy holds as well in the *cure* as the *disease*; let these *Patients* awhile be kept dark, taken from the dazling contemplations of their imaginary priviledges, to the sad reflection on their sins: and as God expostulates with *Israel*, Ezek. 33. 26. *Ye stand upon the sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbours wife, and shall ye possess the land?* So let them recite to themselves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether these be the qualifications of those that shall rest in Gods holy hill? Whether these marks of the

Beaſt can ever rank them among the followers of the *Lamb?* And let theſe Conſiderations be preſt home, reiterated ſo often, till by repeated ſtrokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that Spiritual *Phlebotomy*, temper'd their ſwelling veins, allayed the over-ſanguineſs of their conſtitution: and then there remains but one thing more to complete the courſe, and that is bringing them into the *Work-houſe*, ſetting them really to *work out* their *ſalvation with fear and trembling*, which they had ſo near played away by confidence and preſumption: And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may ſafely reaſſume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their firſt point, and are that in *ſoberneſs* and *reality*, which they then were only in *fiction* and *imagination*.

AND now would God men would once be content to be thus diſabus'd, that they would not be ſo in love with deceit, as in the Prophets phraſe, *Jer.* 8. 5. to *hold it faſt*: that they would not chuſe *Chymæra*'s and *phantaſtick* Images before *real* and *ſubſtantial* Felicities: and prefer that hope which will be ſure to *ſhip-wrack* them, before that which will be *an Anchor of the Soul, ſure and ſtedfaſt, Heb.* 6. 19. and if this ſo reaſonable a propoſal may be embrac't; if the World ſhould, as the *Spaniard* ſaid, but *riſe wiſe one morning*, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands: Many of thoſe they call the comfortable Doctrines would want vent, which are

now

now the staple commodity of his Kingdom. What those are, 'tis no part of my design to examine, it will be every mans particular concern to do it for himself; which he may do by this one test; whether they more animate men to *hope* well, than to *live* well? Whether they bring *Alexanders* sword to cut asunder the *Gordian* knot, to sever between the promise and the condition? Or the sword of the *Spirit* to subdue all to the obedience of Christ? If the former, we may expect the fruits of such will be all that licentiousness which St. *Paul* describes, as *the works of the flesh, Gal.* 5. 19. it being not to be imagin'd, that the *precepts* of the Gospel, which they divide from the *promises* only, that they might fall off, shall then be *voluntarily* taken up in meer good nature and heroick Generosity; that those who are so industrious to avoid the necessity of *Christian practice*, will make it their *free-will-offering*. If there should happen to be some few of so ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain, that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their interest bids them be, and therefore such principles are dangerous Seminaries of *Libertinism*: and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their cheerful *aspect* recommend them to our *embraces*; men may be kill'd with too much *Cordial*; that which seems to refresh the *Spirits* may enflame the *Blood*, and though *cold poisons* have gotten the fame of being the most *malignant*, yet there are *hot* that are as infallibly *mortiferous*. Let it be

our care in oppoſition to both, to keep our ſelves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to *healthy* Souls: and ſince that is the vitalleſt heat which is gotten by exerciſe, ſet to our buſineſs, employ our ſelves diligently in all thoſe duties the Goſpel exacts, and then we ſhall not want ſuch an hope as may warm our hearts, keep us in a cheerful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that *Eternal Salvation which God has promiſed to all them, and only them that obey him.* And till we do thus, till we conſider as well what we are to *do*, as what we are to *receive*: there will be no hope of reſtoring Chriſtianity to its native vigour; we ſhall make it evaporate all its ſtrength in *unſignificant hopes*, convert it into Air, to bear up our Bubbles, inſtead of that *firm ground*, whereon we ſhould build *virtue* here, and *glory* hereafter.

CHAP. V.

A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Carnal Conſideration.

AFTER the diſadvantages of *partial* Conſideration, may fairly be ſubjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is impregnated by *ſenſuality* and ſloth, and makes pretence unto right *reaſon*, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the fruſtrating the deſign, and enfeebling

feebling the force of our Religion: such close *reserves* of deceit and malice have men to their own Souls, that when they quit *one* strong hold of Satans, 'tis only to retreat to *another*. When they are not so *brisk* and Aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts, that lye in their way: they are so *gross* and unwary as to fall at them; if they may not pass for Straws and Chaffe, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into Heaps and Mountains, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence; and when they are call'd upon to Consider them, they do it in so perverse a manner, as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity: their *consideration* is worse than *neglect*. They look into them insiduously, not as *Disciples*, but as *Spies*, not to weigh the obligeingness, but to quarrel the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions, not to direct their *practice*, but excuse their *prevarications*.

FROM this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the *Precepts* have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks: that this *Canaan* is a land that eats up its inhabitants, wherein there is so little of *enjoyment* that it scarce affords a *being*. Men count a *life* under such restraints, so joyless and uneasie, that it differs from *death* only, by being more *passive*. They think *Zeal* like a *Hectick Feaver*, in a slow but certainly fatal *Fire* exhausts and consumes the *Spirits*. Mortification

fication and *ſelf-denial* macerate and decay the *body*; and *liberality* diſſipates and waſtes the *eſtate*: and with theſe Apparitions which themſelves have conjur'd up; men run frighted from duty, reſolve the burden is unſupportable, or at leaſt grievous to be born, and therefore, as our Saviour ſays of the *Phariſees, will not touch it,* no not ſo much as *with one of their fingers, Mat.* 23. 4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their meaſures from their own, or perhaps other mens prejudicate opinions, and thence take out an *Authentick Record* and *Patent* for ſloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore ſit ſtill; firſt call Chriſts commandments *grievous,* and then improve that ſlander into a *manumiſſion*; abſolve themſelves from obeying them. And unleſs they may have the Gate to life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their luſts about them, will never eſſay to enter it.

BUT if the *Prince of darkneſs* have enacted it a *Law,* that difficulty ſhall paſs for excuſe, yet if *real* uneaſineſs may be admitted to be as deterring as *imaginary* ones, his own decree will retort the moſt ruinouſly on himſelf, and men may plead it as their diſcharge, from all thoſe baſe drudgeries, thoſe tyrannous impoſitions wherewith he loads them. The *Drunkard* may experimentally tell him, the *pain* of an aking head, of an overcharged ſtomack, the *ruine* of a waſted Eſtate, and claim a diſpenſation from purſuing that uneaſie and coſtly ſin. The *Wanton* may bring

bring his macerated body like the *Levites* Concubine *Jud,* and urge it as an evidence how cruel a Master he serves; and from thence emancipate and free himself: and indeed every sin carries in it so much of visible toil, or secret smart, as would by force of this rule supplant and undermine its self; and sure *Satan* would never have arm'd men with so dangerous a *weapon,* had he not discern'd them so in love with *slavery,* as secures him it should never be us'd against him; for if it should, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably shake his Kingdom. Nor would only that *infernal Region* feel the force of that *destructive* principle; it would make as strange confusions in *secular Regiments.*

FOR if such *pleas* as these may be admitted, they will easily cancel all *Humane,* as well as *Divine* Laws, and every *malefactor* will transfer his *guilt* on the severity of the *Legislator*: the *Thief* may say it is too great a difficulty for him to resist the temptation of an apt *opportunity*; a rich prize that his fingers are too slippery even for himself, and he cannot restrain them, and then quarrel the strictness of the *Law,* which has rais'd so high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it must endanger his *neck.* The *Rebel* may complain that the bands of *Allegiance* are too strait, the yoke sits too close, galls and frets his tender flesh, exclaim loudly at the *Tyranny* of those that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noise of his own *Treason.* And so every other transgressor may accuse the rule, as accessary

ceſſary to his ſwervings, till at laſt the *Laws* be made the only *Criminals*.

I leave every man to judge both of the equity and conſequencies of ſuch diſcourſings in *Civil* matters, and ſhall only deſire he will apply them to *Spiritual* alſo, where certainly they are neither more juſt, nor leſs ruinous; and whileſt ſuch abſurd *pretences* as theſe paſs currant, no wonder if *Chriſtianity* languiſh and grow impotent, want ſtrength to impreſs its ſelf on the lives of its *profeſſors*. The moſt infallible receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the ſuſpicion of its bitterneſs, refuſes to taſte it. The moſt excellent *Laws* muſt look their regulating *power*, where the *execution* of them is obſtructed; and we may as reaſonably look for the efficacy of *Chriſtianity* among thoſe who never heard the *name*, as among thoſe, who owning the *name*, do yet diſclaim its *precepts*; and ſo all thoſe interpretatively do, who by accuſing them of too great rigour, avert both themſelves and others from their Obedience.

THAT the Charge is ſcandalouſly unjuſt will appear to any, who ſhall allow themſelves the juſt means of information; but alas the way of *Proceſs* men take in this affair is ſo inequitable, as certainly preſages the partiality of the *ſentence*, what Perſon ever was there ſo innocent, ſo excellent, who if arraign'd at the *Tribunal* of his mortal enemy could be acquitted, *Chriſt* himſelf ſhall be pronounc'd a *Blaſphemer*, when a *Caiphas* is to examine him: and no wonder if his *precepts* find

propor-

proportionable dealing, if they be decried as *impossible, tyrannical,* perhaps *ridiculous* too, where the scanning of them is referr'd to those, whose interest it is to defame them. Men enthrone their *lusts,* set them up in the *judgement seat,* and none can expect they shall pass such a *sentence,* as shall include their own *condemnation*: if they own the *Commandment* to be *holy, just* and *good,* they must tacitely accuse *themselves* to be *impure, unjust* and *wicked,* and as such to be consign'd to wrath and judgment.

HERE then we have the true account how Christs *commands,* which are in themselves so *far* from grievous, have gotten so unkind a *reputation* among us; this is so direct a course for it, that we may cease our *wonder,* though not our *grief* to see it, for we behold them stand to the award of those with whom they have a profest enmity: the *Goal* gives sentence on the Bench; the *Bar* arraigns the Judgment Seat. Certainly when that Law which is *Spiritual* is submitted to the arbitriment of gross *carnality,* the Law of liberty is taxed and rated by those worst *bondmen who are sold under sin*; 'tis impossible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpose to dethrone sin, dispossess it of the Empire it has usurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the same *exclamation* the Devils us'd to Christ, *Why art thou come to torment us?* But as if this *general Antipathy* were not enough to ascertain the rejection of Christs command; as if the *National* feud, as I may call it, between Heaven and Hell were not thought irrecon-

irreconcilable enough, men offer yet harder meaſure, call in the aid of *perſonal* quarrels, and when the precepts come to be conſider'd, refer each of them ſingle to that *particular* Vice to which it has the directeſt *contrariety*.

THUS when Chriſts command of *meekneſs and forgiveneſs, of loving enemies, and turning the cheek, bearing the Croſs,* or *ſelf-denial* calls for audience; they conſult (as *Rehoboam* did with his young hot-ſpurs) with their anger and malice, their rankor and revenge, and they ſoon give their *Verdict*; that to be meek is to be *ſervile,* a temper fit only for the abject. That to forgive enemies is a principle of *cowardize* that would Emaſculate the world; to love them a piece of *Spaniel-like fawning*; but to turn the Cheek; not only to hazard, but invite new injuries by owning them as benefits, paying bleſſing for curſes, kindneſs and good-turns for hatred, is ſuch a *ridiculous patience,* as muſt expoſe to the inſolence of many, and the ſcorn and deriſion of all men. And then the *reſolution* is ready they will be no ſuch *fools* for Chriſts ſake. So when the precept of humility and lowlineſs comes to be conſider'd, their *Pride* is deputed to hear its plea, and then though it bring the authority of Chriſts *example* as well as his *command,* it will be judg'd invalid: *Chriſt* indeed *took upon him the form of a Servant,* and to that humility was a proportionable *Adjunct*; but what is that to them whoſe aſpiring humour abhors ſubjection, 'tis not calculated for their *Meridian,* they are of another manner

ner of Spirit, and would not have it embased by the admission of so mean a quantity: and though Christ have put *poverty of Spirit* among his Beatitudes, they resolve he shall not ensnare them with that *artifice*, they will not take his *measures* of felicity; or resign that pleasure they have in valuing themselves, for any thing he proposes in exchange. In like manner the precepts of temperance, sobriety and chastity, are not permitted to the judgment of sober *reason*, nay, nor of meer natural *desire*; but to *appetites* vitiated and inflam'd, by radicated *habits*; and then the *Glutton* thinks to eat moderately, is to be starv'd; and will as soon *put a knife*, Prov. 23. *to his throat*, in the vulgar sense of cutting it, as in *Solomons* notion of restraining his excess. Thus the *Drunkard* with his false thirsts looks on sobriety as a kind of Hell, where he shall want *a drop to cool his tongue*, and thinks the abandoning his debaucht jollities is an implicite adieu to all the comforts of life. The *Unclean* person when his blood is high scoffs at Chastity as a religious kind of impotence, and only so far considers the *precept* of *pulling out the Eye*, as to infer that it were as easie literally to part with it, as to restrain its lustful range: not look at all, as not look to lust. And proportionably it fares with Charity and bounty, which though our *Saviour* recommend, *Mammon* arraigns of robbery, and stigmatizes as a *Thief* that picks the Purse, and riffles Coffers. But amidst all these *the taking up the Cross, suffering for righteousness sake*, and *the doctrine of self-denial*,

nial, fall under the heavieſt prejudice. Theſe are oppos'd not by ſome one ſingle vice, but the confederate arms of all; even thoſe whoſe intereſts are flatly oppoſite do here unite: *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Saduces* and *Phariſees* accord againſt Chriſt, and all are freely ſuffer'd, nay invited to exhibit their *complaints* againſt theſe *Mandates*. *Covetouſneſs* cries out that this is the moſt ruinous prodigality, caſts away an eſtate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confiſcation: and *Prodigality* takes it as ill to be foreſtall'd, and have nothing left for it to diſſipate. *Prophaneſs* avows a contempt of it as a folly, and moſt open madneſs to part with *real* pleaſure for an *empty* name, or profit for that *Bankrupt thing* call'd Conſcience: and *Hypocriſie* has a more ſecret hatred of it, as its detector; that which will bring it to a Teſt which it cannot paſs. *Malice* puts in a *Caveat*, that this is to gratifie enemies, and loſe the ſatisfactions of revenge: and *Self-Love* puts in another, that it is to deſtroy ones ſelf. In ſhort, every *limb* of the body of ſin diſcharges a *blow* at this innocent and Divine Sanction; as if they meant it ſhould exemplifie its own doctrine by aſſuming that paſſive temper it recommends.

BUT alas, who can expect any more *upright* verdicts from ſuch *pact*, ſuch *corrupt* Juries, and why may not Chriſt be permitted to claim the common *benefit* of our *Laws*, to make his challenge and exceptions againſt this ſo incompetent *impanel*. 'Tis the counſel of the Wiſe man, not to

to advise in common affairs with those whose tempers may be suppos'd to bias them, *consult not,* saies he, *with a coward in matters of war, nor with a sluggard of much business,* Eccl. 37. 11. and sure if they be ill *Counsellors,* they must be worse *Judges*: but why then do we set pride to judge of humility, lust of purity, covetousness of liberality: and make our *vices* the *arbitrators* of those *Laws* which should restrain them? This is such a gross *injustice* as common *humanity* abhors; we deal by other measures with men, the most notorious and flagitious criminals: and reserve this way of process for those things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a severe exprobration of a prophane people, *Malach.* 1.8. Where God accuses them for treating *him* with less reverence than they would do a *mortal* Prince. *Offer it* now *to thy Prince*: but alas we shall force him to descend far lower in his expostulation, so far we are from paying him the *duty* and regard belonging to a *Prince,* that we yield him not the rights of *common* men: force him to stand to those measures which we think too unequitable to press upon a murderer, a thief, or rebel at the Bar.

BUT this waving of common rules is a plain confession that we need more indulgence, than those will allow: when mens *lusts* thus usurp the *Tribunal* and judge in their own cause, 'tis a palpable discovery they dare not remit themselves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their interest, they pass a

right judgment: for 'tis certain were the *caſe* referr'd to any competent Judge, indeed to *any* but *themſelves* they would inevitably be caſt; and ſure 'tis high time that ſome ſhould aſſiſt *oppreſt vertue* in its appeal; find it out ſome *Court of equity* where its plea may be heard: and we need not travel *far* for that purpoſe, every man may do it in his own *breaſt*, where in his little *Common-wealth* he ſhall find a *Court* of Gods erecting: let him but draw the Cauſe *thither*, diſcuſs the matter in his own conſcience; and he will ſoon find the former unrighteous ſentences revers'd: let him but ſeriouſly reflect on his *violations* of thoſe ſacred Precepts of Chriſt; and obſerve what a *ſting* and ſecret remorſe every ſuch *breach* leaves within him: and that will be a competent atteſtation of the *equity* and obligingneſs of thoſe Mandates: for from whence elſe can the regret ariſe? thoſe things that are either impoſſible in their nature, or unconcerning to us cannot beget it. No man accuſes himſelf for not flying in the *air*, or walking upon the *water*: nor owns himſelf *guilty* in the non-obſervance of any *Laws*, but ſuch as have *power* to oblige him: and therefore theſe cloſe pangs and checks of *Conſcience* are an irrefragable evidence, that men do *inwardly* aſſent to the juſtice and authority of thoſe divine *rules*; which their *actions*, yea often their *words* too, do moſt oppugn.

BUT over and above the throws and afterpains of conſcience, when ſin is brought forth, the ſelf-accuſation of the *Criminal*, when none beſide

side controuls, nay many flatter and commend: I say beyond this secondary and reflext *Apology*, for Christs Law, owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate *verdict* past in its behalf, in the esteem and liking which those documents command, where ere they pass: creating an assent and veneration not only when obey'd, but from profest despisers; who cannot chuse to think well of that vertue they desert, and the necessity of their affairs compel them to speak ill of. An event *visible* in the condemnation of our Saviour, where the *Judge* who *gave Sentence* against him, at the same moment *washt his hands*, and openly profest *he found no fault in him.*

AND indeed this very reflexion on the *Author* of these precepts, if well consider'd would supersede all other arguments. The *Mandates* of the Gospel on this one score, that they are Christs, are certainly both *pure* in themselves, and *possible* to us: and so most worthy not only of all *Obedience*, but all *Love* too. He who is our *Lord* upon both the titles of *Creation* and *Redemption*, may certainly with all justice impose what laws he pleases on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the transgressions which were under the first Testament, cannot be imagin'd so inconsiderate of our frailty which himself had smarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigor, or be so prodigal of his bloud, as to pour it out for those who by a new set of impossible commands should infalli-

bly reforfeit themſelves again: and if this cannot be ſuppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath ſo far condeſcended to our imbecillity, as not to *preſcribe* us any thing which he either finds or makes us not able to *perform*. 'Tis true indeed, his *Laws* are above the reach of our corrupt and debaſed *nature*; and they were unfit to be his, were they not ſo: but when he by his grace offers to elevate and refine this nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of thoſe Laws, this is a far greater mercy than if he had deſcended to our corruption; ſo he might have contaminated himſelf, given laws unworthy of him: but alaſs what advantage would it be to us, to have the *Blaſphemy* mention'd, *Pſal.* 50. ſo verified to have our *God* in this ſenſe, *ſuch a one as our ſelves*? but by this other *Method* he purifies, and exalts us: puts us in a capacity of being *like unto him*, in which is ſumm'd up at once, all both *vertue* and *felicity*.

AND on this glorious *end* every particular *command* of his, has a direct aſpect, every one of them tending to *re-impreſs* on us ſome part of that divine *image* which was raz'd out by the *firſt ſin*: and this one would think enough to recommend them to our higheſt value. Certainly, if *Conſcience* may be *Judge*, it will be ſo: there being in this caſe no middle between *devout* reverence, and *horrid* blaſphemy; for he that deſpiſes ſuch an *aſſimulation*, muſt neceſſarily alſo deſpiſe *him* who is ſo *reſembled*: he who thinks meekneſs, purity, humility, *&c. unamiable qualities*

lities, can have little esteem for him, in whom they are so *transcendently eminent*, but will take the Prophet at his word, and say, *there is no form nor comelineſs in him*, Es. 53. But this sure can never be the *Verdict* of Conscience; he that can thus *pronounce*, must be suppos'd to have suppreſt and *silenc'd* that. It being one of the most indelible *notions* there, that *all that is in God, is sublimely excellent*. But because 'tis indeed too possible that conscience may be put under such an undue restraint, suffer the violence of a *Prisoner*, when it should sustain the place of a *Judge*: because many men dare not permit their consciences to speak, lest they should say more than they are willing to hear. And lastly, since these persons make their appeal to reason, pretend the aids, and boast in the advantages of that, it may not be amiss to bring the *Cause* unto that *Bar*: whose *Empire* and *Authority* none must disclaim that own the *Style*, and least of all those *Scepticks* in Religion with whom we have to do: who will allow of no conviction but from it.

AND *God*, who as the Apostle saies, *leaves not himself without witness*, has so temper'd and dispos'd his *Precepts* as to qualifie them to pass even this Test also, they being not the *contradictions* but *improvements* of natural Reason: and so most apt to recommend themselves to all that is *Man*, not *Brute* about us. Indeed they have the very same aim and design with that. It has ever been the grand business of *sober reason* first to discover, and then to attain that *one supreme*

good, which would give reſt and felicity to the ſoul: in this inquiſition have the *Philoſophers* and greateſt Maſters of Reaſon, laid out their moſt ſerious ſtudies and deepeſt contemplations; and in their indefatigable purſuits ſeem joyntly to ſigh out *David*'s queſtion, *Who will ſhew us any good?* and now the *Goſpel* comes a ſolution of this ſo important a Query, *brings theſe glad tidings of joy* to all people, and that not only in its *credenda*, by informing us what that *Good* is: but in its *agenda* too, by tracing us out the *Way* to it: beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that *ſummum bonum* which our very *Nature* implicitly gaſps after; and ſure *Reaſon* can never jar with *this*, which comes thus as a happy *Auxiliary* to ſuccour its impotence: as an infallible *Guide* to conduct its ſteps: and as a glorious *Light* to give it a clear view, of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain Indication of *Madneſs*, to *tear* and miſchief thoſe things that would be uſeful to us, to curſe and revile a friend, or fly in the face of thoſe whoſe charity brings them to our aid; and therefore 'tis moſt evident that *Reaſon* muſt firſt ceaſe to be reaſon, and commence *Phrenzy*, before 'tis poſſible it can ſet its ſelf in defiance of thoſe Laws of Chriſt, which are thus accommodated to its greateſt Intereſts.

AND as the accord is thus obſervable in the *ultimate*, ſo is it in the *intermediate* deſign alſo. *Reaſon* had by its twilight diſcern'd that, that Soveraign *Bliſs* it aim'd at, would never be hit by an

an unsteady hand; by him who was perpetually tossed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate appetites. Therefore young men, yet in the heat and ferment of their bloud were solemnly proscrib'd and banisht from the Schools and Lectures of *Philosophy*; therefore lustrations and *Cathartick*s of the mind were sought for, and all endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the *fury*, if not extirpate (which some contended for) the very *being* of the Passions: that so a preparation might be made *first* for the knowledge and *then* the attainment of felicity: Now the *Gospel Precepts* have visibly the same *end* and purpose: every one of them expressly singling out some irregular affection to combate and subdue: so that *right Reason* and *They* are evidently of a *Sect* and Party, insomuch that several of the ancientest Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent documents of *Heathen Philosophers* to the *Divine* λόγος, the reason and essential *Word of God* which after was *incarnate* upon earth; and brought auxiliary strengths of *Grace*, to aid the weaknesses of *Nature*. The blessed *Jesus* whose bare word *Checkt the Sea* in its highest fury, and by that Miracle attested his Divinity; as much exerts himself in silencing the louder Tempests, and calming the intestine storms within our breasts. And certainly *Reason* will not quarrel to have been thus reliev'd, it being the *property* only of proud *Folly* to chuse rather to *lose* a victory than *owe* it to the aid of an Allie.

FROM this general view, it were easie to

deſcend to obſerve the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves *a reaſonable ſervice*, and has ſo temper'd his commands, that every Act of obedience we perform may be ſo qualified: and gain unto its votaries the *Elogium* promis'd in the Law of *Moſes*, Deut. 4. 9. *Surely this people is a wiſe and underſtanding People.* And firſt that the command of *Meekneſs* is a moſt *rational* Precept can never be doubted by any who remember but the common definition of *Anger*, that it is *Furor brevis*, and ſure 'tis very reaſonable not to be mad, and he that has obſerv'd the unmanly tranſportations of that wilde paſſion, how that the firſt violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the intereſt, not only of his *Religion*, but common prudence, and right *Reaſon* to ſuppreſs it. And the like is to be ſaid of the more ſolemn *Phrenſie* of deep malice and deliberate *Revenge*, where the fury wants the allay of being tranſient and ſhort liv'd, is embodied into Complexion and temper, and grows inveterate into Nature. *Anger* indeed is a *fire*, and he that touches it though but lightly, will find it *ſcorch* him: but the *Malicious* lays himſelf as it were to *roaſt* at it; prolongs and ſpins out his own *Torment* as if he meant to anticipate his *Puniſhment* in his very crime, and commence his *Hell* here, *in unquenchable fire.* Truly no *ſin* does more repreſent that ſtate of horror to which it tends; it gives a man not only a certain *Title*, but an ample *Earneſt*, pays him part in hand of thoſe diſmal wages. This was ſo well underſtood

stood even by the *Heathens* that we see the *Poets* knew not how more *Emphatically* to describe the future *torment* of an envious and malicious person, than by the representation of his *sin*. *Prometheus Vultur* begins her quarry in this life; every malignant *Thought*, every spightful *Wish* preys upon his *Heart* that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds so mischievously upon the Parent, that the birth seems like that of *Agrippina* when she bare *Nero* that murder'd her. And surely not only *reason*, but common *sense*, will say this is a state to be detested, and consequently must give its suffrage to those Laws of Meekness and Charity which are the only expedients to prevent it. *Peace* is deservedly reckon'd among the *highest blessings* of communities, and sure it has a proportionable value, in every single member of those greater bodies, it being that which is indispensably requisite to the enjoying of any other good. A *War* we know interrupts at once all the *profits* and *pleasures* of a Nation: and this hostile *Temper* in a mans mind does the very same, and like *Choler* in the stomach, takes off all *gust* of the most delightful things, and so becomes a *Hell* in the *pœna damni*, as well as that of *Sense*: and then how absurd an impatience is it, for men to think every the slightest injury from another insupportable, and yet heap such heavy pressures upon themselves, like froward *Children* roar out for the least touch from *another* hand, yet knock

knock and batter *themſelves* without complaint: as if their only contention were, that they may be the ſole *Authors* of their own *Calamity*. And that which adds yet more, if it be poſſible, to add to ſo vaſt a folly, is, that *Revenge* never repairs any *Injury*: if I have been reproacht or defam'd, 'tis not the wounding of my enemies body that will heal my fame, I may by that means help to ſpread the Libel by inviting many to enquire the cauſe of our quarrel: but that is no *Medium* to prove him a ſlanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it: ſo far it is from being ſuch, that it gives a moſt violent preſumption of guilt, according to that notable *Obſervation* of the *Hiſtorian, Convitia ſpreta exoleſcunt, ſi iraſcare agnita videntur*. In like manner ſuppoſe me hurt in my body, *Retaliation* brings no *balm* to my ſores: my pains abate not by his having the like or greater; nor would my Wounds *feſter the leſs* though his ſhould *Gangrene*. So if I am endammag'd in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own loſs; and generally the ſpightful ſpoils that are made, are of that nature. 'Tis true, the Law may in ſome caſes repair the injur'd perſon: but then that is owing to the Juſtice of the *Law*, not to the malice of the *Plaintiffe*: for he that ſues upon the naked intuition of recovering his *Right*, without any aſpect of *Revenge* on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the *Law* (and indeed none can innocently have

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it otherwise) and then to what serves the vindicative humor, what increment or advantage can the superaddition of his revenge bring him in? 'Tis sure in all these instances it often does the quite contrary: plunges him in farther troubles and dangers, and when all this is consider'd, we may certainly pronounce *Christs* precept of Meekness, partakes as well of the *Serpent* as the *Dove*, is as well *prudent* as *innocent*: nor is this *Conclusion* at all shaken, by that *Objection* which men make from the danger of inviting more injuries and affronts by this tameness: for first suppose there were truth in it; that hazard could not ballance the many certain mischiefs which have been evinc'd inseparably to follow the contrary temper: and it were certainly less penal to endure multitudes of light and transient *Abuses*, than those far more uneasie waies of *Redress*, which mens revenges suggest to them: and then 'twill be perfectly reasonable, *of* these *two evils to chuse the less*. As for the greater and more important violations, there are legal waies which may prove redress in some cases, or prevention in others: He that is slandered or impoverished, may take a course to clear his *Innocence*, or recover his *Goods*: he that is hurt or maim'd, though he is uncapable of reparations, yet the Law provides for his future security, by awarding such *Penalties*, as may discourage the *Offender* from repeating the *violence*: and to these aids, a man may resort with these *Proviso's*, *first*, that he abstract from all design of *Revenge*; and *secondly*, that the matter be

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of *Weight*; and certainly he that by these *legal means* cannot be secur'd, can be much less so by any *private attempt* of his own: For he that despiseth the coercive *power* of Laws, will much more contemn the *enmity* of a single person. The only difficulty in this case is, when a state is in such a confusion that there is no lawful Judicature to appeal to, but that implies so many sadder miseries, than the want of such a redress amounts to, that every man may patiently enough cast this into the heap of greater evils; and not consider that one pressure, when so much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But sure the *Suspension of Law* in this particular does no more *qualifie* a private person to be his own *Revenger*, than it invests him in any other part of *Authority*, and he may with as good right place himself on the Bench, and become a *Judge* in *other* mens causes, as thus become both *Judge* and *Executioner* in his *own*.

BUT in the *last* place, the ground of this objection seems weak and sandy; for that meekness is not the way to expose a man, generally speaking, to more suffering: 'tis possible indeed through the barbarity of some few insulting *cowards*, who love to vapour *good cheap*, that they may trample on those who give least resistance; but this is not the common bent of *humane Nature*, (which ought to be the measure in this case) we find men usually exasperated by *Opposition*, who are calm'd and appeas'd by *Gentleness*. *Anger* is not of the nature of that monstrous *Fire* the

the *Historian* tells us of, which *nothing but blows could extinguish.* It is the *Observation* of the wisest of Men, that *a soft answer turneth away wrath,* and mens *Passions* are like *Bullets* which batter the walls which stand inflexible, but fall harmlesly into Wool or Feathers; and I doubt not common experience will attest it, that none do generally fall under fewer of these storms than they, who are thus prepar'd to bear them. Let a meek and an angry person cast up their Accounts together, and compare the number of affronts and contumelies they have met with, and I believe the *Odds* will be as *great,* as between *Sauls* thousands and *Davids* ten thousands. 'Tis certain that the return made to the first injury provokes a new one; men being so partial to themselves, that he who receives a harm by way of *Retaliation,* never reflects on his own first guilt, but looks on it as a naked *Injury,* and so pursues his Revenge, which has again the same effect on the other, and so this *wild-fire* runs round, till it have set all in a *flame*; made the saddest vastations, not only in mens *Minds,* but their outward *Concernments* too, in the many fatal outrages, which these eager contentions occasion, all which would be avoided by a meek disregard of the first provocation: So that although some injuries may fall upon the Passive man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone the great accumulators and multipliers of injuries; which alone demonstrates how unjustly *Meekness* is charg'd with so much as an accidental

production of them; and vindicates that *precept* of *Chriſt* which has faln under ſo much, not only *Cavil* but *Scorn*; it appearing that to abſtain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to Gods providence (which is the importance of his command to *turn the Cheek*) is the greateſt even moral *Security* againſt *Violence*, and ſo approves our *Lawgiver* (in this ſo decried particular) to be as well the *wonderful Counſellour*, as the *Prince of Peace*.

IN the next place, if we weigh the *precept* of humility and lowlineſs in the *balance* of ſober diſcourſe, we ſhall certainly find it hold a *juſt weight*. Indeed *Pride* is nothing but *Deceit*, a meer cheat and deluſion, and ſo every man can diſcern it in another, we *there* are able to trace the windings of this *Serpent*, and ſay *this* man thinks himſelf more wiſe, *this* more learned, a *third* more holy than he is: yet alaſs in our own breaſts we diſcern not the *Abuſe*, ſuffer him to perſwade *us* what he but promis'd to our *firſt Parents*, that we are *as Gods*, ſomething ſo ſuper-excellent, that all muſt reverence and adore: And herein we take him at his word, never ſuſpect theſe glorious *Attributions* may be no more than *Complement* or Flattery; or what is no leſs obvious, *Deriſion* and *Scorn*. To a conſidering man 'twould be a ſhrew'd *preſumption* againſt whatever *Pride* ſuggeſts, that 'tis attended always by *ſelf-love*, which is, as it were, the *common ſetter* to all thoſe cheats which circumvent and fool us: But there want not alſo more convincing proofs of its deceit and unſincerity. When e're we overween and believe well of

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our selves, it is in contemplation of some *imaginary* or else *real* good; somewhat a Man has not, or somewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a gross *Delusion*; a kind of *deceptio visus*, a filling the Eye with phantastick *Aerial* Images, which have no *solid* Being: And God knows, such *Phasmes*, such Apparitions are most of those *excellencies* which men applaud in themselves; things conjur'd up by the *Magick* of a strong imagination, and are only seen within that *Circle* in which the *Enchanter* stands: And though *Satan* be the *grand Master of this black Art*, yet his *Pupils* are now grown so dextrous, that he seldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondnesses to our selves, are abundantly sufficient for the purpose. But if in the *second* place we suppose the things to be *really* existent in us, yet *Pride* runs us upon an *other error* no less dangerous than the *former*, for it betrays us to mistake the true *Owner* of them, emboldens us to set our own mark upon those *rich Wares*, in whose acquest we have not been so much as *Factors*; God is the one great Author and proprietor of all that is or can be valuable in us; to his Providence or his Grace we owe all the accomplishment of our outward or inward man, and though he allows us the *use* and benefit of them, yet the *Glory* is a special *Royalty*, which (as the Gold or Silver Mines of a Nation) is reserved to his *Crown*, an incommunicable piece of his *Regality*. And how wofully does our *Pride* befool us, when it brings us in such false *Inventories*

ries of our goods, makes us dream our ſelves rich by anothers wealth; like *Children* that *call every thing theirs which looks ſplendidly*, or the mad *Athenian* celebrated by *Horace* for his happy phrenſie, that *reſolv'd all the Ships and Wares his own that came into the Cities harbour*: But how more ſadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invaſion of *his* propriety, who is not as the impotent *Monarchs* of the earth, unable to aſſert his own *Rights*, but can certainly *Vindicate* himſelf to our *Confuſion*, againſt whom no rebellion can be any longer proſperous than he willingly permits it, and who has ſolemnly avowed *he will not give his glory to another*: And when our *Pride* makes us thus both ridiculous and miſerable, when it ſeduces us not only into the folly of *Children* and extravagancies of *Lunaticks*, but at once into the guilt of bold, and puniſhment of improſperous *Rebels*: Certainly *Reaſon* can never become its *Advocate*, or put in any *demur* to that *Sentence* which excludes ſo treacherous a *gueſt* out of mens hearts; which is the ſole aim of thoſe *laws of humility* which *Chriſt* has given us.

NOR will the Precepts of *Temperance* and *Purity* find any *worſe doom* at this *Bar*, the contrary *Vices* being ſuch indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any *countenance* from this Supreme part of it: 'Tis the prerogative of our Reaſon, that it diſcriminates us *from*, and elevates us *above* beaſts: Nor can it ever be brought to reſign this ſo glorious a priviledge, aſſent to the admiſſion of thoſe brutiſh appetites

petites which would over-run the *Soul*, level its *superior* with its *inferior* faculties; confound the distinction of *Rational* and *Sensitive*, and in a word, render the *Beast* so ravenous as to eat up the *Man*. Yet *thus* it is in those sordid Sins of *Intemperance* and *Uncleanness*, unless perhaps they are so much worse than *Beastial* that I wrong the generality of the Brutes in the comparison, it being only some few of them, the very *Beasts* of the Beasts that are guilty of any such *Excesses*, for generally their *Appetites* do not transgress the *regular ends* of *Nature*, they know no such disease as *Surfetting*, but eat to satisfie *Hunger*, and couple at such seasons as best tend to preserve their kind; and then 'tis to be consider'd how base, how *degenerous* a descent it is for us to stoop, not only below our *own* nature, but *theirs*; what a *solitude* these vices reduce us to, that not so much as the nobler sort of *Beasts* will bear us *company*, we must wander upon the *mountains* to court a *Goat*, we must rake the *mire* to find a *Swine*, before we can furnish our selves with any *Associates*: And sure all this so open an *Hostility* against Reason, that it can by no means be her *interest* to abet it. Ask her whether she would be *prest to death* with *loads of meat*, whether she would be *drown'd* in *floods of drink*, whether she would be *suffocated* with the *noisome vapours of putrefaction* and rottenness, and the *answer* she gives to these tells you her sense of *Gluttony*, *Drunkenness* and *Uncleanness*: Alas she suffers from them the most barbarous outrages, is invaded not only

in her *Authority*, but her very *Being*, and therefore even upon the ſo celebrated principle of ſelf-preſervation, muſt muſter all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend her ſelf. And then certainly *Chriſts Commands* of *Sobriety* and *Purity* muſt needs be entertain'd with all *Alacrity* and *Gladneſs*, as an acceſſion of *ſtrength* to her party, an *aid* to aſſiſt her in that juſt and neceſſary *War*.

AND as *Reaſon* thus pronounces againſt the ſins of the *Fleſh*, ſo in the next place does it certainly againſt thoſe of the *World*. *Mammon* himſelf will not be able to bribe this *Judge*, but when *Chriſts Precept* of Charity and liberality comes before this *Tribunal*, it will infallibly be not only *acquitted* but *magnified* and applauded, be call'd from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, Commiſſioned like the *Jews*, *Heſt.* 9. *To bear rule over them that hated them*, to diſſipate at once the wealth and the covetouſneſs of the *Worldling*; have the *Keys* put into its hand, that it may have free acceſs to his *Coffers*; this certainly muſt be the event of this trial, for 'tis confeſſedly the part of *Reaſon* to *diſpoſe* every thing to thoſe *uſes* which are moſt *proper* and *advantageous*, ſuch as may bring in moſt *real benefit* to the owner. Now what other employment of *wealth* is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a mans *Felicity*? If it be laid out like the *Rich mans* in the Goſpel *in delicious Fare*, or *Purple* and *fine Linnen*; certainly it makes no leaſt approach towards it. Firſt, for exceſſive Fare, if a man be *not exceſſive* too in the eating,

eating, what does he *enjoy* of it? *Meat* has no natural propriety to the *Eye*, and can make no impressions of pleasure there; but if he be *voracious* and intemperate, 'tis then so far from making him *happy*, that it dejects him into the *forlorn condition*, even now mentioned, sets him at odds with his *reason*, his very *manhood*, nay, I may add with his very *sense* too; the displacencies that he receives by the consequencies of his excess, far outweighing all that is grateful in it. This is well describ'd by the *Wise man*, *Eccles.* 31. 19.

AS for the *gayety of Apparel* that can never in sober judging be thought any *advantage*, 'tis that which only *Youth* and *Folly* puts a value upon, and as we out-grow the *one*, so we do the *other*: All that is convenient in Cloaths is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A *rich suit* is only *heavier*, not *warmer* than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to see *how heavily vanity*, which is in its self so *light*, sits upon some men; who are content even to make themselves *Porters*, so their *Tailors* may lay on the *burthen*: And thus in many other instances the fineness of Cloaths destroys the ease, so that it often *helps* men to pain, but can never *rid* them of any; the body may be languishing and infirm under the most splendid cover: *Herods royal apparel* secures him not from being *eaten with Worms*; and *Lazarus his Ulcers* would have been never the less *painful*, though they had been *wrapt in* Dives *his fine Linnen*.

OR if the *Wealth* be laid out on any other part of *that* the world calls *greatness*, as an *Honourable*

retinue, Troops of attendants, and the like; the return will be no leſs *empty*: Multitudes of unprofitable *Servants* being a geat *burthen,* but no degree of *advantage*; alas does my *Meat* reliſh ever the better, becauſe my *Table* is ſurrounded with *Waiters*; or when I go out, does my *train of followers* make the *Air* the *more refreſhing* to me, does not rather the *Duſt* they raiſe make it *leſs,* annoy and ſtifle me? As for *matter of buſineſs,* the number of *Servants* tends rather to *hinder* than *advance* it; daily experience atteſting, that in crouds of domeſticks every one of them thinks his idleneſs will be hid: The care of *doing* and the guilt of *omitting* is transferr'd from one to another, and none has any farther *thought,* than how he may *quit* himſelf either of the *burthen* or the *blame*; ſo that upon the final account all that accrues to a *Maſter* by the *greatneſs of his family* is the *encreaſe of his care* in the regiment of it: A great deal of vigilance and circumſpection being requir'd, to keep it in any tolerable *order,* and if it be not ſo kept, his Houſe becomes a *wilderneſs,* and himſelf a *prey* to the Beaſts he feeds: The licentiouſneſs of the Servant redounding more ways than one to the damage of the *Maſter.*

IF we ſhould now proceed more *minutely* to every other *ſingle expence* which *vanity* and *pride* ſuggeſts, we ſhould certainly find the like ſucceſs of our inqueſt; nothing of *real felicity,* but on the contrary the *vanity* ſo interwoven and incorporate with *vexation of Spirit,* that 'tis impoſſible to ſever them: So that *thus* to employ ones riches

riches is rather to *suffer* than *enjoy* them; but if we suppose a man on the other side such a *Reverer of his wealth,* that he dares not *employ* it at all, unless it be at the *bank,* for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beasts reserv'd for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation. Such a person is surely of all others, the farthest from receiving any advantage by it: he converts it from a *Servant* into a *Tyrant,* and sad experience shews us the calamity of such a transmutation. It has been always held the *severest treatment* of *Slaves* and *Malefactors damnare ad Metalla,* force them to dig in Mines; now this is the *Covetous mans lot,* from which he is never to expect a *release,* as being his *own* remorseless and more than *Egyptian task-master*: and the parallel holds too, in the gainlesness as well as laboriousness of the work; Those wretched *creatures* buried in *Earth* and darkness were never the *richer* for all the *Ore* they digg'd, no more is the *insatiate Miser,* he has no power to *dispose* of any of his *acquests*; and though he calls them *his,* yet alas he *possesses* them no otherwise than a *Prisoner* does his *Goal,* a *Mad-man* his *Chains,* they are only *Instruments* of his *Thraldom,* and the getting more serves only to add more weight to his Shackles; and certainly *Wealth* can be no way worse dispos'd, than thus to buy so base a *Servitude.*

AND now since neither the *luxurious* spending, nor the *covetous* keeping can *advantage* us one step towards any thing that can be call'd

happy; but do on the contrary *engage* us upon toil and *miſery*: *Wealth* ſeems to be a very oppreſſive *burthen*, ſuch as we can neither *caſt off*, nor ſafely *bear*; and truly ſo it is till *Charity* comes into our Aid; which as the proper *Element of Wealth*, renders that *light* which gravitates elſewhere, and as the *Elixir* unto *Metals* transforms them into *Gold*, ſtamps *purity* and *price* upon them: by freely giving, endows the *Donor* with what ever he beſtows; enriches *him*, and what is more, enriches *wealth* its ſelf. Without this *Art of uſing*, and diſpoſing our eſtates, we are thoſe *Indians* who change their *Gold* for *Glaſs*: that ſilly *Fiſher-man*, who having found a *Maſs of Ambergreece*, employd it to the *liquoring of his boots*; are fooliſh to the height of *Midas* in the Fable, who being promis'd to have what ever he would *wiſh*, made his *demand* that every thing he toucht might preſently be *Gold*, and run the hazard that he did of being *ſtarv'd* by our unhappy affluence: men ſay indeed that *Gold by preparation* becomes a *ſoveraign Cordial*, but certainly it never does rejoyce the heart ſo much as when *Charity* is the *Chymiſt*, the *poor mans hand* is the beſt *Limbeck* to extract this *Magiſtery* and *tincture*, the *flames of love* will really perform thoſe *Miracles*, they of the *Furnace* boaſt of, and would they employ themſelves in this *laboratory*, they would find the *omnipotent efficacy* they dream of, ſooner in this way of *diſſipating*, than in all their *Arts*, or rather *Fancies* of generating Gold. 'Tis certainly a moſt generous and enlivening *pleaſure* which reſults

sults from a *seasonable liberality*: When I see a man strugling with *want*, his very spirit as well as body stooping under the pressure; if I then relieve him, the *humane nature* within me which is common to us both, does by a kind of *Sympathetick motion* exult and raise up its self, but if I have any *piety* that must do it much more; for as the *former* shew'd me *my own image* in my poor *brother*, so *this* shews me *Gods*; and how transcendent a satisfaction must it be, to have thus rescued him who bears so divine an impress, to have paid some part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own *being*, by making my self in my low sphere the giver or preserver of that life, which he first breath'd into another. *This*, and this only is the *way* to raise a *felicity* out of *wealth*; and surely since the attaining of *happiness*, is the one grand *pursuit* of our *Reason*, that must even before it has subjected its self to the *Faith of Christ*, give assent to the *Prudence of his Command* in *this* as well as the *former* instances.

BUT there remains a *Precept* of our *Saviours* allied to this; which seems by no means to *comport* and *hold a correspondence* with the dictates of *right Reason*: the *taking up the cross*, and *suffering for righteousness sake*; which contradicts the fundamental law of self preservation; and the great end of being, felicity and happiness. But this *suggestion*, how specious soever it appear, is utterly *fallacious*; for 'tis no good consequence, that because *Reason* aims at our being *happy*, therefore it forbids us all *voluntary sufferings*, since

that the caſe may be ſo ſet, that *ſuch a ſuffering* may be the *faireſt medium* left us to our *happineſs*. 'Tis a known rule that *of two evils, the leaſt is to be choſen*; and the election of the leſſer ill, though it be no *abſolute*, yet is a *comparative* good; and its *attainment* as far as the neceſſity of our affairs permit, is our *felicity*: and reaſon can provide no farther. Now this is the eſtate of the preſent inſtance: *two evils* are propos'd, a *Natural* and a *Moral*; the Natural, though in its ſelf to be averted, yet much inferiour to the Moral, and then *Reaſon* ſoon reſolves the *Dilemma*, that the *Natural is to be choſen*: all that can be queſtion'd in this affair, is *whether Reaſon define the moral evil to be the greater*, but this can bear no long diſpute with any who conſider but the *Nature of Reaſon*, which being ſeated in the *upper ſoul* of a man, is no way concern'd in thoſe *Ills*, which make their impreſſion on the *ſenſitive part*, but *Moral* ills ſtrike higher, invade the *mind*, cloud the *reaſon*; nay, often depoſe it from its regiment, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vicious habits, and therefore by how much our *reaſon* is ſuperior to our *ſenſe*, ſo much are thoſe to be accounted the *greateſt evils*, which aſſault that *nobler part* of us. This certainly will now be the *determination* of Reaſon, if ſhe may be permitted the freedom of her vote: for thus was it formerly where ſhe bare the moſt ſway, and uncontrouled rule: The wiſeſt and beſt conſidering of *humane*, as well as *divine Authors* having eſtabliſht it as an undoubted *Aphoriſm*,

risin, that *honest is to be preferr'd before both gainful and pleasant*: so that nothing renders a man so *deplorable*, as that which violates his *integrity*; nay they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to *become voluntiers in vertues warfare, not to suspend their sufferings till they were forc't out by the competition of a crime*; *but offer themselves free oblations.* Thus to suffer for ones *Countrey* or ones *Friend*, was thought so *worthy*, so *heroick* a thing, that *noble* and *ingenuous spirits* were *æmulous* of it: and it was so stated a case that *Epictetus* forbids a man, on such an occasion to consult with the *Oracle*, whether he should do it or no, it being *necessary* to be done, what ever ill success or ruine be predicted, ὅτι ὁ θάνατος σημαίνει, ἢ ἀπήωσις μέρος σώματος, ἢ φυγή, and how serious they were in these *perswasions*, some of them have *practically* evidenced, as having *suffered* very inconsiderable pressures, nay *death* its self rather than they would bow to the *prædominant vices* of their Age, or omit the occasion of *eminent vertue*. *Aristides* would be just in spight of *Ostracism*. *Regulus* observant of his *Oath* made to a *faithless Enemy*, though *Death* and *Torment* attended the *Performance*. *Lycurgus* to perpetuate to his Citizens the benefit of his *good Laws*, as subtly designs *perpetual Banishment* unto himself, as others use to contrive for *Honour* and for *Empire* there. *Codrus* redeems the safety of his *Army* with his own *Death*: *Curtius* makes himself a *Martyr* for his *Countrey*, and *Socrates* in the stricter sense becomes one for his *God*: laid down his *life* in attestation

teſtation of that moſt *fundamental truth* and leading *article of Faith*, πίστευειν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν, the *belief* of *one God*. And yet we find not that *thoſe Times*, which were ſo *ill* as to ſhed his *Bloud*, were yet ſo *bad* as to defame his *Memory*, he's not recorded either as *fool* or *hypocondriack*; nor have his *ſufferings* ſtruck him out of the liſt of *Philoſophers*: but he ſtands there the more conſpicuouſly in thoſe *bloudy Characters*; and however the credit of the *Oracle* may be otherwiſe diſparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared *Socrates* to be the *wiſeſt of Men*. And yet both he and the reſt, had either *none*, or very *imperfect* confus'd apprehenſions of a future *reward*, when they engaged on preſent Suffering, and death its ſelf: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that ſome ſtrange change and *tranſmutation* has now befaln *Vertue*, that it has put on ſo much a *diſtant* appearance from its *ancient* ſelf, that the acceſſion of new obligations, and higher hopes, ſhould abſolve, avert and utterly diſpirit us; inſomuch that what was Conſtancy in a *Heathen*, ſhould be Folly in a *Chriſtian*. Certainly this is a *Metamorphoſis* of our own making, we look through deforming *optick glaſſes*, ſuch as our *Avarice* or effeminate *Senſualities* convey into our hands, which give not only *ſtrange* and gaſtly, but withall *ridiculous ſhapes*; but if we would conſult our *Reaſon*, that would ſhew us things in their *proper forms*. Vertue and Reaſon are both the ſame they were ſo many hundred years ago, and where the *Object* and the

the *faculty* admit of no *mutation*, 'tis impossible there should really be any such *variable appearance*. If *Socrates* were so zealous for the *one God*, that he chose rather to relinquish his *life*, than to consent to, or but connive at the *profane rivalry of Polytheisme*, and yet be no Fool; certainly we may as sucurely transcribe his copy: and though the particular Article may not be the same; yet if it be any thing wherein vertue is concern'd, the cause is no less warrantable: he that suffers for a *practical* Point, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the highest *Speculative*. The *Commandments* may have as good *Martyrs* as the *Creed*; for the same *Authority* has requir'd our *Obedience* to the *one*, that exacts our *Faith* of the *other*. Nor is there any necessity of *Heathen* or *Jewish* Tribunal, to convert our sufferings to *Martyrdom*; we may receive that crown from the hands of those that own the same faith with us. Those that say with the most seeming vehemence *let the Lord be glorified*, may yet hate and cast out their brethren for his name sake, *Isa. 66. 5*. He that tells me I fear not *God so much* as he, may yet persecute me for honouring the *King more*; and my *Bloud* pour'd out upon that account, becomes an *acceptable Sacrifice* to him, who has commanded my Subjection to the *Higher Powers*. He who calls Christ his *Head*, may yet rend and tear his Body; and if I love its communion so well, as to take my share in the *Massacre*, I approach toward that dignity and comfort S. *Paul* so glories

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in, of *filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Chriſt in my fleſh, for his bodies ſake which is the Church*, Col. 1. 24. He that mulcts the more *Indeliberate* Oaths, may yet enjoyn a *ſolemn* Perjury: and if I chuſe he ſhould rather make havock of my *Goods* than my Conſcience; my *Spoils* become not more monuments of his *rapine*, than my *piety*; they plead my *Innocence* before him who *will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain*: and how profanely ſoever my *Wealth* is diſpos'd by him that ſeizes it: 'tis accounted to me as caſt into the *Treaſury*; and ſo 'tis poſſible I may at once vie with the *Rich-men* in the greatneſs of the oblation, and with the *poor Widow* too in that higher circumſtance of its being all. In ſum, the opportunities of *Martyrdom* are not reſtrained to thoſe points wherein *Chriſtians* differ from *Jews* or *Heathens*, but extend to all wherein we Chriſtians differ from our rule, the commands of our bleſſed Maſter. If I ſuffer for my *Conſtancy* to any of them, I have certainly my place in *Gods Martyrology*, as well as if I had faln under any of the *ten Perſecutions*. God was not ſo partial to the *primitive Chriſtians* as to allow them the *Monopoly* and encloſure of that dignity; if *they* as our *elder Brethren* had a *double portion*, yet there is ſtill a *childs part* left, for every one of us enough to teſtifie our *Legitimation*, and ſecure us from the brand of *Baſtardy*, Heb. 12. 'twas S. *Pauls* indefinite Affirmation, and all times ſince have born witneſs to the truth of it. That *all that will live godly in Chriſt*

Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Some *unfashionable Vertues* there have been in every Age, which have whetted, if not the *Swords*, yet the *Tongues* of men: and those that happen not to fall under *Abels* persecution, must not hope to escape that of *Isaac*: if they meet with no *Cain* to *kill*, they will undoubtedly with an *Ishmael* to *mock* them. But in what dress soever our *Sufferings* appear, a *good Cause* divests them of their *frightful shape*, pulls off the *ugly vizard*, and shews us a *Beauty* that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the Eye of our *Faith* but our *Reason* too. *Fortitude* was a *Vertue* before *Christianity* had a name in the world; and the very instinct of our *Nature* whispers within us, the *baseness* of being baffled out of a Truth or Vertue; yet such a despicable *Coward*, is every man that wants this *passive Valour*, without which the *active* must find another name, Rage or *Phrensie* it may be, in some perhaps natural *Courage*, or sanguineness of temper in others, but true Valor it is not, if it knows not as well to *suffer* as to *do*. That *mind* is truly great, and only that which stands above the *power* of all *extrinsick violence*; which keeps its self a distinct *principality* independent upon the outward man, so that it is not subjected to its fate, that can be *free*, when the body is fast *bound* in Misery and Iron, *sound* and *healthy* when that *groans* under torture, and is never more *strong* and *vital*, than when that *languishes* and *expires*; and this is so desirable, so transcendent a *priviledge*, as *Reason* cannot but *aspire to*: and this is

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it to which this excellent *Precept* of Chriſt advances us when we thus *ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake*, our Minds are all *light* what *darkneſs* ſoever involve our exterior part, and is like *Goſhen* exempt and ſecure, when that falls under all the Plagues of *Ægypt*.

AND what reaſon thus embraces for its ſelf, 'tis not imaginable that it ſhould reject, becauſe 'tis richly clad, that the *Race* ſhould ſeem the more tedious, becauſe there is a *Crown* within view; or that the glorious *Rewards* our Chriſtianity propoſes to our conſtancy, ſhould be eſteemed as *Menaces* and *Threats*, Temptations to deſert or turn Apoſtates. No certainly, *Reaſon* cannot diſpute, and make an *Inference* ſo utterly *Illogical*, but will rather uſe it as an *enforcement* of its former *Concluſion*, eſtabliſh it the more *firm* and immovable by having the *Baſis* thus enlarged, having *Reward* added to *Vertue*; and *Happineſs* entail'd on *Duty*. If in the competition between two Evils, *Reaſon* pronounce the *leſſer eligible*: Much more will ſhe reſolve, when the conteſt is 'twixt *good and evil*, the greateſt Evil and the greateſt Good; and chuſe that *Excellence* which though *Superlative* in its ſelf, is more endear'd and heightned by *Compariſon*. If I violate my *Reaſon*, if I renounce *Vertue*, though bare and naked, then ſurely I do it yet more when ſhe is thus *accompliſht* and adorn'd; when *beautified* on purpoſe to allure the *eye* and take the *Heart*. When over and above the poſitive donation of Happineſs, ſhe adds a reſcue and releaſe from *Miſery*, and equally

equally obliges by the distant prospects of a *Hell* and *Heaven.* So that not only the *Gospel promises,* but even *menaces* and *threats* become a *Weapon* in the hand of *Reason,* when she stands upon her *guard,* and fights for *Vertue.* If *sin* present its self as my *Protector* from a *temporal* Calamity, *Reason* will tell me hence, that the profer is insidious, it exposes me to that which is *infinitely worse* than what it pretends to save me from; and that not only in the former respect of *Guilt,* but in that of *Punishment* also. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the *Dungeon,* and send me to the *bottomless Pit,* to save me from a *temporary Fire,* and thereby mark me out as Fuel for *eternal Flames*; to take me out of *their hands* who can *kill the Body,* to put me into *his* who can *destroy both Soul and Body in Hell. Reason* tells me I am to abhor the *Turpitude* and *foulness* of a Crime; and it tells me too, I am to dread the *Misery* and Smart of it also. It would not have me wallow in the *mire,* though it were *safe,* much less when it is full of *Asps* and *Vipers,* which will infallibly sting me to death. It cries out with *Joseph, How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* And it cries out with *Esay* too, *Who can dwell with everlasting Fire?* In a word, by the domestick native *light* of the *Candle of the Lord* set up within our *breast,* it shews the uglines of *Sin*; and shews it too by the affrightful dismal *blaze* of those *unquenchable flames* it kindles: Thus by the different *Arguments* of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of interest and duty, *Reason* asserts this

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ſcorn'd, decried, neglected *Precept*: Take her as meer *Paynim* abſtracting from the expectation of reward or puniſhment; or take her as a *Proſelyte* to Chriſt, contemplating his promiſes and threats, if there be *Honeſty* or if there be *Religion*, in either inſtance the Soul muſt ſtill conclude, that *Affliction is to be choſen rather than Iniquity.*

AND if it be reaſonable thus to *reſiſt even unto blood ſtriving againſt ſin*, if *Reaſon* blow the *Trumpet*, ſound the *Alarm* to this ſolemn *War*, then ſurely it preſcribes ſomething of *Martial diſcipline* to prepare and diſpoſe us for thoſe *Combats*. No expert *General* will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the *Field*, but will by little bloodleſs skirmiſhes inſtruct them in the manner of the *Fight*, teach them the ready managery of their *Weapons*; and of this ſort are all thoſe *voluntary Self-denials*, and lighter auſterities which Chriſtianity commends to us, which become neceſſary not ſimply for themſelves, but as inſtruments towards a higher end. The Military fame the *Romans* had in the world was atchieved by the exact diſcipline of their Camps, enuring their Souldiers to labour and hardſhip. And, as *Tacitus* tells us, when a *long Peace* had ſlackned the reins of diſcipline, that *active Humour*, which was wont to be ſpent on the Enemy, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their Commanders, begat nothing but *Mutinies* and diſorders; and certainly 'twill be the ſame in our *Chriſtian warfare*, if we abandon our ſelves to Eaſe and Sloth, never attempt to wreſtle with a difficulty, but

but keep our selves in the posture the *Israelites* Camp was in at *Moses*'s descent from the Mount, *eating and drinking, and rising up to play*; our appetites will grow licentious and insolent, past our controle and guidance. If we treat them with such an indulgence as is recorded of *David* to *Adoniah*, never say so much as *why hast thou done this*; 'tis not to be expected but they will Rebel though a *Solomon* sit in the *Throne*. For alas, how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himself any the *smallest* or *most trifling pleasure* he had a mind to, shall on a sudden deny *all in the gross*; he who has projected *many*, but never wav'd *one* Opportunity of shewing his *Wit*, how shall he find in his heart to become a *Fool for Christ*. He that has gratified his *Palate* with all that pretends to be gustful to it, how shall he descend to the *bread of Affliction*; or he that never tried to miss a Meal, how will he entertain the unwelcome contrariety of not knowing where to get one. He who has never abated any thing of the utmost *Pomp* he could reach, how will he brook the *want* of *necessaries*; or from his House seil'd with *Cedar*, and painted with *Vermilion*, be content with his *Saviours* Lot, *not to have where to lay his head*. In short, how shall he who never could pare off any of the *Excrescencies*, the meer *Vanities* and *Gaieties* of an estate, part with it *all*; or lay down that *life for Christs sake*, from which he never substracted one smallest *Pleasure*. *Suffering* is a thing to which the *sensitive* part of us has an Innate *Aversion*, and Aversions are not to

be ſubdued at *once*, but by gentle and eaſie *degrees*; and cuſtom muſt have introduc'd a ſecond nature, before that original part of our temper will be ſupplanted. As 'tis therefore highly reaſonable for every man to aſpire to the *Dominion* of himſelf, to keep his *Affections* within his own *Power* and *Command*; and though he have no *Intereſt* at all in the *greater*, enjoy a ſoveraignty in the *leſſer* World: So in order to that, 'tis as reaſonable to diſcipline and tame them by ſome voluntary *Acts* of *reſtraint*, like *Hannibal*, ſometimes to *paſs by that water to which his thirſts do moſt importunately invite him.* To try by little *skirmiſhes* what *ſtrength* and skill he has, before he runs the fatal *hazard* of a *Battel.* To deny himſelf in the *leſſer* inſtances, that ſo when the *greater* come, they may not have the *diſadvantage* of Uncouthneſs and perfect Strangeneſs to inhanſe their *Difficulty*; and this muſt certainly be acknowledg'd *reaſonable*, or elſe we muſt condemn almoſt all the receiv'd *Rules* of *humane tranſactions*, which generally have this for their *ground-work*, that men muſt paſs through the *firſt Principles* and *loweſt Rudiments* of any Art, before they can arrive at its height. Men ſerve *Apprentiſhips* to Trades, and think not themſelves the firſt day *Maſters* of their craft; we advance in *Learning* by leiſurable and ſlow *ſteps*, and skip not from the *A B C* to the *Metaphyſicks*: And certainly the skill of *Chriſtian ſuffering* is not the eaſieſt of all *Trades* or *Sciences*; but will require ſome time of *Initiation*, many repeated Trials and Eſſays to bring us into

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an acquaintance with it: To convince our *Understandings*, and perswade our *Wills*, that *to lose our lives is to save it*; and *to be faithful unto the death*, is the best way *to gain a Crown of life*.

IF I should now proceed to every other *Precept* of Christ, and examine it by the *Rules* of *sober Discourse*, we should infallibly find them so *rational* as befits the Laws of *him* who is the *eternal Reason*, but having made these *Essays* in *some* of the most oppos'd Instances, I shall presume these may pass as the *Representatives* of *all* the rest; and the acquittal these have receiv'd at the Tribunal of Reason virtually involve them all.

AND now since both *Conscience* and *Reason* have pronounc'd the same of Christs *Laws* that *Pilate* did of his *Person*, that *they find in them no fault at all*; methinks *Judges* should have the same *priviledge* that is allowed to *private Men*, that *in the mouth of two every word may be establisht*: But if any man be so scrupulous as not to rest in the sentence of *less* than a *Triumvirate*, let him *in Gods name* bring in a *Third*, and when his vicious *Appetites* (which were before excepted to as parties) are set aside, he cannot be distracted in his *Choice*, there being but *One* more that can possibly be call'd in, and that is *Experience*, which being a *Judge* that himself must create, he can not fear it should be prejudic'd against him; so that he may entertain full confidence of its *Integrity*: And no less may he do of its *Ability*, this being the most infallible of humane determinations, such as often corrects the *error* of *Speculati-*

on; and ſhews us the vanity of *concluding* what is *practicable in matter* from being *demonſtrated in the Scheme* or *Diagram*: The *guidance* of an *illiterate Traveller* in the way that he has gone, being far more uſeful to a *Stranger* in his journey, than the beſt *Maps* and moſt exact *Deſcriptions* of *Geographers*. But then it muſt be indeed *Experience*, and not only ſome ſlight and tranſient Eſſay. We call not him an *experienc'd Phyſician* that has had *one Patient*, or a *Lawyer* that has pleaded *one Cauſe*. *Experience* is the *daughter* of *Time*, and is made up of many *ſucceſſive Trials*, as a *Habit* is of *multiplied Acts*: And to the *Verdict* of ſuch an Experience Chriſts *Precepts* will not fear to *ſtand*; let a man put himſelf into a ſetled courſe of *Obedience* to them, abſtain ſo long from all *prohibited Commiſſions*, as may wear out the *rank Taſte* wherewith his *Palate* has been ſeaſon'd, and leave it free and diſengag'd, and then infallibly he will find ſuch a *ſavour* and *ſweetneſs* in thoſe *vertues*, that he will wonder how he came to be cheated into an *opinion* of their being *bitter* and *unſavory*; and will have no *appetite* to *return to his Onions and his Garlick* after he has thus been fed with *Quails* and *Manna*. That this will be the *event* of this *experiment* there is all *ground of certainty*, and when the *trial* is once made, ſo irrefragable an *evidence* will follow, that it will not leave a man the *power to doubt*: Only in the *interim* ſo much *belief* is requiſite, as may let him in to the *demonſtration*, make him ſet to *that* Practice from whence he is to reap all *this*: And if any

any man be so much a *Sceptick*, as not to have *faith* enough to put him on the *adventure*, I should at once for his *conviction* and *punishment*, wish but that he might a while extend the same *distrust* to Affairs of *common life*: Let him doubt whether his *meat* be savory and *refuse to eat*; whether his *cloaths* be warm and so *go naked*; whether his *house* be firm and *lye without doors*: and when he has a while thus smarted under his own *discipline*, let him but apply the *wisdom* he has thus bought to the present *instance*, and it will unquestionably resolve his *scruple*; or if he be still too Impatient to attend the ripening of his *own* Experience, let him make use of *other* mens. Let him appeal to any who has inur'd his *neck* to Christs *yoak*, and ask him whether it be *galling* and *pinching*, or whether it be not *easie*, nay *gracious*. Let him ask one who by repeated restraints hath subdued and tamed his *natural rage* or *pride*, how he likes the *change*, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no less *happy* than a *calm* is after the noise and danger of a violent *Tempest*, or the ease of a broken *Imposthume*, after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one who has divested himself of all his *sensual sins*, whether by their *absence* he now discern not their *necessity*, and he will tell them, 'tis but the same the *primitive* him
Christians had of those *Beasts skins* wherein their *persecutors* had clad them, whose only use was by *deforming* to fit them for *devouring*. Let him come to the converted *Mammonist*, and ask him which he finds the better *Treasury*, his *own* Coffer

or the *poor mans* Bowels, and he will be able to aſſure him, he is become *much richer* by having *leſs in ſtore*. Let him come to the devout *Aſcetick*, and ask him what *taſte* he finds in *Daniels* unpleaſant *bread*, *Dan.* 10. 3. and he will tell him *infinitely more* than ever he did in *Dives delicious fare*, that cloy'd and ſurfeited the *fleſh*, this nouriſhes and ſupports the *ſpirit*. Nay finally, let him come to him that is actually *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*, and he will exemplifie to him the *Beatitude* which Chriſt has pronounc'd of ſuch: Let him viſit *Paul* and *Silas* in the *priſon* and he ſhall hear them *ſinging*; *Peter* and the other *Apoſtles* after their *ſtripes* and beating, and he ſhall find them *rejoycing*: And *Stephen* amidſt the Throng of his *murderers* and Tempeſt of their *ſtones*, and he ſhall obſerve him overlooking them all, and entertaining himſelf with a more *pleaſant proſpect*, ſeeing the *Heavens open'd and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God*; and why ſhould not other mens ſucceſſes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it ſeldom miſſes to do it. The Trophies of *Miltiades* at *Marathon* diſturb'd *Themiſtocles* his ſleeps, till he had rais'd unto himſelf and Countrey more glorious ones at *Salamine*: *Cæſar* while he views *Alexanders* Image upbraids his own ſlackneſs with the memory of his conqueſts, and inſpirits himſelf to great attempts. He that returns with a *rich fraight* from a *new-found-Land* encourages others to Trade *thither* alſo: Nay, even a *begger* ſpeeds not well at an *Hoſpitable door*, but he is able to ſend *ſholes* upon

on the like hopes: Much less does he that has found a *treasure* need to use his *Oratory* to invite *partakers*; and why then should those *few* that have made this more precious *discovery* be forc'd to *monopolize* it, as not being able to *draw in partners*; yet God knows, thus it is, those that hear of no *rarity* but they long for it, as *David* after the waters of *Bethlehem*, can yet hear the same *David* cry out, *how sweet the Lord is*! and yet have no curiosity to taste it: Those whom the very name of *Liberty* so captivates, that they sacrifice all that is really valuable to that *Chimæra*; can hear the *Apostle* speak of the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*, and yet like hardned *Gally-slaves* despise the *Manumission*. Those that hunt after *pleasures* till the very *pursuit* become an unsupportable *pain*, can be told of those *rivers of pleasures* wherewith God offers to quench their thirst, and yet inflict on themselves the *rich mans torment*, and deny so much as to *dip the tip of their finger* toward the *cooling* their own *flames*. Good God what strange *infatuation* is this, that while there is so much of *vicious envy* in the world, there should be nothing of *vertuous emulation*: That mens heat and vigour should all spend its self in childish pursuits, and leave them thus cold and stupid to their great and *serious* concernments. And what remains to him that ponders this *Epidemick* folly, but to breath out *Moses*'s Wish; *O that men were wise*; or if that be too hopeless a vote, *O that men were not so destructively foolish*; that their rashness and Error might be confin'd to

their lower intereſts: And as *fools* are treated, *be kept from dealing in things of conſequence*; that they would not govern their Souls by ſuch an abſurd kind of managery, as they will not truſt with the meaneſt of their outward concerns. And if this might but be obtain'd, if this *fatal Oſcitancy* which has benumm'd and frozen them were but *caſt off*, they would then from the report of the *good Land* be animated to their *journey*; and rather chuſe to make the concurrent Teſtimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than *leave* them as Hand-writings to *appale*, or Witneſſes to *condemn* them. And he that ſhall thus borrow other mens *experience* with this *deſign* of *copying it out*, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby poſſeſſes himſelf of one of the greateſt *advantages* of the *communion of Saints*; kindles himſelf at their *fire* till he grows bright and high as it; combines his *flame* with theirs, and ſo encreaſes the Ardors of them both; follows Example till himſelf grows exemplary, and in one Act *receives* and *gives*. But he that thus ſets out, muſt remember, that it is more than the Journey of one day he has to go; he muſt not think (as I ſaid before) that every little *ſuperficial attempt* is that Experience which he is in queſt of: He that thus phanſies will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis ſure there is in all *habits* ſuch a *force*, that they are not to be diſpoſſeſt but by a contrary violence, and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious *cuſtom*, enters at firſt into a ſtate of *hoſtility*, has ſuch a tough *oppoſition*,

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as rather finds him Work than Pleasure: Now if he shall upon this first Essay pronounce, he is like to pass a very *unjust sentence*: Let him fight on a while till he have got some ground, and then though the War afforded him *little* pleasure, the Victory will yield him *much*. Every repeated defeat he gives his Adversary will be a new triumph to him, and what the *Romans* courted as so great a Dignity he may every day *enjoy*. But then as he advances farther to the completing of his *victories*, so he does of his Pleasures too: when his irregular *appetites* are so subdued, that they rarely make *insurrection*, this is such a state of *tranquillity* as gives him leisure to discern, and enjoy the delights of Christian vertue, and will teach him to reproach the highest *Panegyrick* he ever heard of it as flat and imperfect: so infinitely will he find it exceed the utmost *description*, that he will say with the Queen of *Sheba*, *the one half was not told him*. This is the rich prize which they shall obtain that *run* the race, but it is not awarded to the *first step*; and hence it is so many fail of it, that when they find the uneasiness which attends the breaking off a *custom*; this is such a *Gyant*, a son of *Anak*, as turns them back discourag'd from the *Canaan* they went to view. But alas this discovers how small a stock of Resolution they carried out with them; for where men set out with *heart* and *appetite*, 'tis not such little *difficulties* that will dismay them: if it be but their *sports* they are engag'd in, it serves to deceive the sense of many uneasinesses, nay often dangers,

dangers, he that is but in chaſe of a ſilly *Hare* is ſo keen upon it, that he feels not the wearineſs of a whole days motion, and if he meet with a *hedge* in his way will rather leap it with *hazard* than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis ſure in their ſins they ſuffer far greater hardſhips without diſcouragement. The puny *drunkard* is not diſheartened by the *firſt qualm*, but repeats his *exceſſes* till he have overcome his *queaſineſs*. The caſt *Litigant* ſits not down with one *croſs verdict*, but recommences his *ſuit*, paſſes it through all *Courts*, and conſiders not his own *pains*, ſo he may either weary or force the other out of his *right*. The *Unclean perſon* falls not out with his ſin, how ſadly ſoever it hath macerated him, but ſteps out of the *hot-houſe* into the *Stews*, and ſhall men be ſo indefatigable in their purſuits of *Infelicity*, buy one *Torment* with another, and drive on the year in a circle of ſuch woful Traffick, and ſhall *vertue* and *pleaſure* be thought not worth the ſmalleſt *labour*? Can they keep themſelves in a *perpetual contention* with their *eaſe*, their *reaſon*, and their *God*; and can they not endure a ſhort *combate* with a ſinful *cuſtom*, which if it have ſome *uneaſineſs*, yet its both infinitely ſhort of what they have ſuffered in the contrary compliance, and beſides carries its *remedy* in its hand: For if the Difficulty ariſe only (as doubtleſs it does) from the confirm'dneſs of the Habit, every Act of reſiſtance as it weakens the Habit, ſo it abates the Difficulty. It is therefore a moſt *unreaſonable inference*, from the *trouble* of the firſt oppoſition,

tion, to conclude the *Impossibility* of the future; for if the *first* were but troublesome and not impossible, the *second* will have yet less of the trouble, and so be yet farther remov'd from impossibility, and the *third* than the *second*, and so on till the difficulty vanish and disappear. And if men would but assume such a *moderate courage*, as but to *keep the field*, and not to run away upon the first gun-shot, they would soon find how impotent *Assailants* they had to deal with, who can never subdue any man by *strength*, who is not first Emasculated by his own *fears*. Let us therefore to shun the reproach of so dishonourable a Defeat awake and rouse our selves, put us in a *posture* of *defence*: And *Satan*, who is as cowardly as any thing in the world but we, *will* as St. *James* assures us, *fly from us*. Let us upbraid our selves with our unseasonable hardiness and resolution in our impieties, till we have chang'd the *scene*, grow impatient of those *servile drudgeries*, and ambitious of these *honourable adventures*. And to animate us the more, let us fix our *eyes* upon the glorious *prize* of the *victory*; and that not only the *final* and *eternal* in future Glory; but that *Intermediate* which offers its self as the *earnest* of *That*, the calm and pleasure of a conquering piety. The *Roman* story tells us that the *Flavianists* had so possest their minds with the *spoils* of *Vienna*, that they grew insensible of all *dangers* in the way to it, and even forc't their General *Antonio* to put them upon those hazards, which his wiser conduct would have declin'd. And why should

ſhould not our more worthy *Hopes* excite as great an earneſtneſs? why ſhould not we have as great an *Appetite* to the pillaging of *Satans Camp*, plundring that infernal *Magazein* of all its *Engins* both of *Mine*, and *battery*, its ſtores of *arms* and *Ammunition*, leaving him naked and defenceleſs, unable to make any impreſſion upon us? and this he certainly does, who by a ſteddy *practice of vertue*, comes to diſcern the *contemptibleneſs* of thoſe baits wherewith he allures us. He that ſeeks only the *praiſe* of *God*, looks upon the *applauſe* of *men* as a *blaſt* of Air, which poſſibly may demoliſh and deſtroy a *glorious building*, but cannot give *foundation* or *materials* to it; and therefore will not ſeek for, or ſolicit its unhappy courtſhips. He who deſires to be *great* only *in the Kingdom of Heaven*, laughs at the buſie *Aſpirings to ſecular greatneſs*, and wonders at the force of that *enchantment*, which engages men with ſo extreme toil, to climb a tottering *pinnacle*, where the ſtanding is uneaſie, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be *rich towards God*, and has inur'd his eyes to that *divine Splendor* which reſults from the *beauty* of *holineſs*, is not dazled with the *glittering ſhine* of *Gold*: conſiders it as a *vein* of the ſame *earth* he treads on, and deſpiſes that abſurd *partiality* whereof the Prophet accuſes *Idolaters*, to employ one part to the meaneſt uſes, and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the *eternal things that are not ſeen*, will through thoſe *Opticks* exactly diſcern the *vanity*, and *inconſiderableneſs* of all that is *viſible*

visible and *temporary*; and so will be equally unmoved with the terrors or allurements of the world, and neither frighted nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified discourages and wearies out his Tempter, deprives him not only of *weapons* but of *heart* too, and drives even *Satan* himself to desperation; and when the Enemy is thus beat out of the *field*, there remains nothing but to enjoy the *victory*. When that *reluctance* and *resistance* of the *corrupt Appetite* is so weakned and subdued that a man acts with *freedom*, he acts with *pleasure* too. A *heart* thus *set at liberty*, alacriously *runs the ways of Gods commandments*: it faring with *it* as with a *Patient* that is prescrib'd *exercise* for *health*; who at first perhaps finds *lassitude* and *trouble* in it: but when the *obstructions* are remov'd, and *nature* disburthened of those *noxious humors* that encumbred her, that which was at first his *task*, becomes his *recreation*. For we are not to think, that it is any *innate harshness* in *piety* that renders the first *essays* of it unpleasant, that is owing only to the *indispositedness* of our own Hearts. We are in the Prophets phrase *bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke*; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis because of our impatient strivings, and irregular motions under it, the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards when it is more tamely born: and yet the Ease is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a short way to that felicity we now speak of, to wit, That we compose our selves to such a submiss and malleable temper

temper, that Chriſt may come only to govern us as *ſheep*, not to be put to tame us as *Tigers*. let us withdraw all ſupplies from our *luſts*, and not by any ſecret reſerv'd affection give them clancular aids to maintain their *Rebellion*, and then they will not be able long to make any *vigorous oppoſition*, nor conſequently much to diſturb the *tranquillity* of thoſe who have thus reſign'd themſelves to the government of the *Prince of Peace*: and if this cannot be done in ſuch an inſtant, but that there will be ſome previous diſplacencies, and uneaſie ſtruglings, yet even thoſe like the *Scorpion*, carry *Antidote* againſt their one *ſtings*, when 'tis conſider'd that they are but the *pangs* of the *new-birth*, they will become very ſupportable by the expectation of that Joy to which they tend. An enſlaved people think themſelves fairly advanc'd to happineſs, if they can get but to make head againſt their oppreſſors, though they muſt expect many ſore *conflicts* and ſharp *engagements* before they become *Victors*: and certainly 'tis matter of ineſtimable joy to him, who has been under that ſad ſpiritual ſlavery to be ſet thus upon even terms, with his ſword in his hand againſt thoſe, who once had him in ſuch vaſſalage that he durſt not lift up a thought againſt them; but eſpecially when 'tis remembred with what *invincible aids* he is backt, ſuch as will aſcertain him of *victory*, if he do not treacherouſly defeat himſelf. And ſurely he muſt be of a ſtrange *phlegmatick temper*, whom all theſe conſiderations will not enliven, convey in-

to

to him so much spirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon so pressing, so great a concern which meer curiosity prompts men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and stubborn clay, he that has not lost one of the *elements* of mans composition, and has but a *spark* of *fire* in his temper, will surely have some *warmth* towards this so inviting an *experiment*: and when he has once made it, I doubt not, it will then joyn with the suffrages both of reason and conscience in approbation of *Christs Laws*, and will with *Solomon* pronounce of this spiritual wisdom, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. 3. 17.

AND now it must be a strange *Violence* of impiety, that must break this *threefold cord*, that shall disannul the joint *sentence* of all that are competent *Judges* in this matter. This is not the strength of *Samson* that *brake withs and cords*, but of the *Legion* that *pull'd in pieces fetters and chains*; and though too many men make it their *own work*; yet certainly 'tis only the *Devils Interest*: he aspires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive than these prejudices we take up against Christs conduct. A *Soul* like a *Nation*, can neither bear *two Legislators*, nor be without *one*: And *Satan* having but that single competitor, our quarrelling with Christs Laws, is virtually an embracing of his. When we send *Christ* that rebellious message, *Nolumus*

hunc

hunc regnare, we ſay to the other as the *Trees* to the *Bramble,* Jud. 9. 14. *come thou and reign over us.* And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his oppoſite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Chriſts commands as irrational or ſevere. The traducing of a government being, we know, the immediate *præludium* to the caſting it off; *libelling* the forlorn-hope to rebellion. But would God men would ſoberly weigh whither ſuch a mutinous humor tends; and when our outward *Condition* has given us ſo many pregnant and coſtly *Proofs* of its ruinous *effects,* take caution that it make not the like wrack within us: that we do not madly exchange Chriſts *gentle ſervice,* and *glorious Rewards*; for Satans *cruel bondage,* and crueller Wages: the *golden chains* of the one which do more adorn than tie us; for the *Iron,* the *Adamantine* links of the other, which bind us till they deliver us over to thoſe *Chains of darkneſs,* where our captivity ſhall be irreverſible. If this ſo reaſonable, ſo neceſſary a care may be admitted; 'twill certainly confute the profane *ſophiſtry* of our Age, ſilence our impious *Cavils,* and inſtead of providing us of the colour of an auſtere *Maſter* to excuſe our *ſloth*: will engage us to that *diligence* that ſhall ſuperſede the uſe of ſuch *ſhifts,* and then we may hope to ſee *Chriſtianity* have a *Reſurrection day* again, aſſume a Body ſomewhat of ſolidity and ſubſtance; which now wanders about like a *ghoſt* or *ſpectre,* a *ſhade* or vaniſhing *apparition* which leaves no footſteps behind it: and to the re-union, O let us all emulouſly

lously contribute, take up every one of us his dry *Bones* and bring it to the *Prophet*, or rather to *Him* who spake by that Prophet, to breath upon them, till at last they be cemented and inspirited in active *Duty* to shew forth the *Praises of that God who hath call'd us out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

CHAP. VI.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Partial Obedience.

ANOTHER sort of prepostrous Considerers there are, by whom the *power and force of Christianity* is no less obstructed: and those are they that contrive not how they may most *comply* with *it*, but how they may best bend it to *comport* with *them*. That rebate its edge, or turn it only against such of their corruptions as they have least kindness for. That weigh the *Precepts* with no other design but that of taking the *lightest*: those to which their constitutions or other circumstances carry least repugnance; and come unto the *Gospel* not to as a *law*, but to a *Market*; cheapen what they best like, and leave the rest for other customers.

THAT thus it is with, many needs no other proof than the variety visible in the lives of several professors. *One* man behaves himself *modestly*,

deſtly, and tells you his *religion* commands him *humility*, yet at the ſame time tranſgreſſes the as ſtrict precept of Juſtice, and will defraud him he bows to. On the contrary *another* is Juſt but Inſolent, and though his Sentence do not bend, expects his *Clients* ſhould. That man owes the purity of his religion in *viſiting the fatherleſs and widows*, yet diſclaims it again by not *keeping himſelf unſpotted of the world*. This perſon is Abſtemious but Uncharitable, will drink no *wine* but thirſts for *bloud*. He prays much, yet curſes more; whileſt he is meek but indevout. Now while the Rule is one and the ſame, how ſhould it come, that mens Practices ſhould ſo vary, were it not for the unequal Application: did they take it entire, though there might be difference in the *degrees*, yet ſure not in the *kinds* of their Vertues, and as men would not differ ſo from one another, ſo neither would they from themſelves, there would be then no ſuch thing as a *charitable* Drunkard, a *devout* Oppreſſor, a *chaſt* Miſer; *Monſters* engendred by this unnatural commixture of *light* with *darkneſs*, but *Piety* would be uniform and extenſive, and *bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Chriſt*, 2 Cor. 10. 5. And till it be thus, *Chriſtianity* can never be thought to have atchiev'd any part of its deſign, which was not aim'd againſt any one *ſingle limb*, but againſt the *whole body* of ſin. Alas, 'tis not the lopping off one of the remote *members*, that will render the remaining ones any whit the leſs vital, the having a *part* leſs to animate,

mate, will rather serve to concenter the spirits, and make them more active in the rest: as we see the *pruning* of Trees, makes them more *prolifick*. And this effect is very obvious among men: he who has no general dislike to vice, if he repudiate *one*, 'tis commonly that he may cleave closer to *another*; and what he defalks from some *dry, insipid* sin, is but to make up a *Benjamin's* Mess for some other more gustful. If the Wanton be *sober*, 'tis odds he thinks *excess* a Rival to his *lust*, if the Proud man be *liberal*, 'tis because *covetousness* is inglorious; such unevennesses are caus'd not by an *unkindness* to any Sin (unless possibly that aversion which natural constitution raises in some) but by a *partiality* to one or more favourite Vices, for whose better *accommodation*, and *securer reign*, not only Vertue, but other Vices also must give place.

AND this 'tis much to be fear'd will upon a true account, be found to be the *sum* of many mens *piety*, something they think they must pay to the *importunity* of their Religion, which upbraids them so loudly that they are willing to *stop its mouth*, but yet would do it with as much *frugality*, and good managery as may be, and so consider what 'tis they can best spare: what refuse Sin which brings them in little of satisfaction, and is perhaps in competition with some other more agreeable: and *this* they can be content to devote to the *slaughter*, set it to receive all the *impressions of the sword of the spirit*; and so use it as a *buckler* to their *darling lusts*, to ward off those

blows which muſt elſe fall heavy on them; but alas this is not to *obey*, but to *delude*: to ranſom a *greater* Sin with a *leſs*, and to tranſcribe in this matter the Counſel of *Caiphas*: to *let one die for the People, that the whole nation Periſh not.* To make one forlorn guilt a Patriot to the reſt, whileſt in the *tempeſt* which threatned a general *ſhipwrack*, the *precious wares* are preſerv'd, by throwing the *leſs valuable* over board.

AND truly that is commonly the event, men are ſo jolly and triumphant when they have worſted a *trivial inconſiderable ſin*, as if they had defeated the *whole army*: this poor deſpicable *ſpoil*, is ſet up as their *Trophe*, and muſt they think witneſs for them both to God and man, that they are *good ſouldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*: they can like *Saul* with full confidence meet the *Prophet*, and tell him they have *fulfilled the Commandment of the Lord*, 2 Sam. 15. 13. though *Agag* and the beſt *cattle*, the reigning and fatteſt *ſins* be ſpar'd: and while they are thus ſecure, their ſins will certainly be ſo alſo, have no diſturbance or diſquiet from them, but lie at Eaſe and reſt, feed like *Canibals* upon their own kind, be nouriſht by the carkaſſes of thoſe unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot hapned to fall: and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon theſe terms *Satan* himſelf will allow us to *mortifie ſome ſins*, nay will himſelf *caſt the firſt ſtone at them*: and like a rooking *gameſter* purpoſely loſe theſe *petty ſtakes*, that he may afterwards ſweep the *board*.

FOR

FOR if men should give themselves up universally to *all sorts* of Ill, if they should set themselves in a total opposition to *all the documents* of their *profession*, he would lose one of his most useful *engins*; there could be no such thing as a false delusive hope: they might possibly by obstinacy *harden*, or by diversion *gag* Conscience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it sit down well pleas'd and satisfied with its self. For when the *threats* against disobedience shall occurr to the mind of one who has in all instances disobey'd, 'tis impossible he should find any *salve*, any way of Evading the Threats, they make so directly at him: but he who can alledge for himself that he *obeys in some things*, confronts that to all Objections, and resolves he is not *in the list* of the *disobedient*: One or two such comfortable instances are as mighty; as God promis'd the *Israelites* should be, *Deut.* 32. 30. *one able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight*; all fears and misgiving thoughts are dissipated and fled before them: and as once the *French King* in his return to the numerous swelling titles of the *Spaniard*, thought the bare repetition of *France, France, France*, was a full ballance to them all; so when *whole files* of great and scandalous Crimes present themselves, *one single vertue* is thought a sufficient counterpoize. He whose Conscience upbraids him with all Profaneness towards *God*, and in Sobriety towards *himself*: yet if he can but answer that he is *just to his neighbour*, he thinks he has *quit scores*,

and fears no farther reckonings: he who is immerſt in all the *filthineſs* both of *fleſh and ſpirit*, has abandon'd his Mind to *pride and envie*, his Body to *luſt and intemperance*; and ſo ſacrificed both thoſe to *Devils*: yet if he caſt but *ſome grains* of this eſtate upon the Altar; devote any *ſmall part* of that to God, for the uſes of *Piety* or *Charity*; he concludes that *Incenſe* will ſend up a Cloud thick enough, to obſcure the other from the *Eyes* of Divine Juſtice, and yield ſo ſweet a ſavour as will perfume him in ſpight of all that Noiſomneſs: ſo extending old *Tobits* words beyond his meaning, that *alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanſeth from all ſin.* He who is deep in *ſacriledge* and *rebellion*, that can daringly ſwallow repeated deliberate *perjuries*; yet if he can get but the demure tenderneſs, to *fear a ſudden oath*, he is *Chymiſt* enough to extract a *confidence* out of that *fear*, and preſumes that *formal* Civility to Gods name, ſhall expiate all the *real* Violations and Contempts of him: and while men make ſuch uſe of their *partial peecemeal* obedience, it can never be the *Devils intereſt* to diſturb them *in* it, to awake them *out* of their pleaſant dream, or to exact *of* them to depoſite thoſe poor unſignificant *remains* of their Chriſtianity, which ſerve only to make them more *Supine*, not more *Safe*.

NAY indeed his affairs are ſo ſtated, that to ſome he can and does, and without danger allow a yet far *greater indulgence*, he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for Heaven, and yet

yet knows the purchase is far from being made; he can see them cashier not some one *single sin*, but *whole troops* together, and yet not fear the sinking of his Cause: He can trust them so far, that as the *young man* in the Gospel, they may be pronounc'd, *Not far from the Kingdom of God*: yet as long as there is but *one* unmortified Lust, that can send them away *sad from Christ*, his tenure is firm enough. *Herod may hear John Baptist gladly*, nay do many things upon it, yet let him but keep *Herodias*, and she will soon be able to secure both *her self* and *Satan* against the danger of that Competition. This is indeed his main advantage that he can hold fast by the *smallest threed*; and whereas to our bliss a conspiration and union of all Vertues is required; our *ruine* can spring from any *one* solitary Crime: *many rounds* make that Ladder wherewith we must scale *heaven*: whereas *one step* serves to precipitate us into the *Abysse*; so sadly verifying the Poetical Axiome, *Facilis descensus Averni*. In sum, while there is but *any one single sin* indulg'd to: that is the *Devils tedder*; and though it should be imagin'd so loose, as to give men scope to range over *all other sorts* of Vertues, to taste the sweet and feed liberally on them; yet still the *beast* is in the power of him who has fixt the line, not only to be finally led away to *slaughter*, but also to have the *length shortned*, and be either put out of the *reach*, or quite removed from the *view* of those *pleasant pastures*.

FOR though the ſecurity rais'd by ſuch an ununiform piety is in many ſo exactly apportioned to *Satans intereſt*, that he has no cauſe to wiſh the change of his tenure; yet where the circumſtances are ſuch, as will make it uſeful, he can eaſily twiſt his *thred* into a *Cable*. When he thinks one *Monarch* Luſt too mild a regiment, he can ſet up an *Athenian* Tyranny, or which is yet worſe, let in the whole *populacy* of Sin upon the Soul, which like the *Ægyptian Locuſts* ſhall overrun and devour it, *not leave any green thing on the ground*, and that this is in his power we have too much reaſon to conclude. He is we know a cunning *ſophiſter*, and if he has abus'd us ſo far as to impoſe *one* ſin upon us, he may thence very regularly deduce *many more*, as *one* falſe Premiſe admitted, may be improved into *thouſands* of falſe Concluſions. Indeed ſuppoſing a man reſolute to adhere to one ſin, he may with very good *Logick* perſwade him to multitudes of others. There are but two *Objections* uſually made to any Temptation; either the *offence*, or the *danger*; and theſe are uſually objectable to one ſin as well as to another; ſo that this *dilemma* readily offers its ſelf: either it is reaſonable to buy a *pleaſure* at that price, or it is not: If it be, then contrive that the *crime* be pleaſant, and that brings its *diſpenſation* with it: If it be not, then why doeſt thou live in this one ſin in deſpight of both guilt and puniſhment; the *later* part of the Dilemma 'tis no part of Satans buſineſs to preſs, but the *former* he has too much advantage of purſuing ſucceſſefully; if he can but dreſs

dreſs up a temptation to look invitingly, the buſineſs is done. So ridiculous a thing is an *uneven Piety*, that it even laughs it ſelf out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become *uniform Vice*. How abſurdly looks it, to ſee a man run away with *Joſeph* from the embraces of his *Miſtreſs*, and yet with full as great a ſpeed accompany *Gehazi* in the purſuit of a *bribe*; and how obvious is it to conclude that the former aſſault was improſperous only becauſe not manag'd with the *right weapon*; that he might have been *hir'd* that would not be *woed*? What a *mockery* is it for a man to be *zealous for God*, and *rebellious againſt his King*? as in the reverſe, for a man to be *true to his King*, and a *rebel to his God*: and who can but think, that had either of the averted *Crimes* been cookt to their *Palats*, they might have chang'd *Meſſes*. Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of diſcourſe, he that embraces *one ſin* ſhould reject *another*: if it be done only upon *phancy* and *humour*, as the *repulſt vice* will have reaſon to complain of great *partiality*, when as bad as its ſelf is receiv'd and cheriſh'd; ſo it points out a way to attacque him more proſperouſly: let it ſhape its ſelf to the phancy, and ſure *Satan*, who can *transform himſelf to an Angel of light*, can ſoon work that eaſie *change*: let the *younger* Brother get on the cloaths of the favourite *Eſau*, transform its ſelf into the ſhape and intereſt of the darling ſin, and it need not doubt of a free *admiſſion*. But all this while to pretend *conſcience* for ſuch an *abſtinence*, is of all other pleas the muſt abſurd, for

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why ſhould he ſcruple at one, that abandons himſelf to another. As S. *James* argues concerning the *guilt*, ſo may we for the *act* of Sin: He that ſaid *do not commit adultery*, ſaid alſo *do not kill*; and 'tis abuſive mockery, the Souldiers *Ave Rex*, to bow to his *authority* in the *one*, and reſiſt it in the *other*. Thus unhappy is the caſe of him who entertains one ſin, his encloſure is broken down, and he's a common for all: he is left deſtitute of a reply to any temptation, and like a *baſhful* perſon will be in danger of *yielding*, becauſe he is aſham'd to *deny*: and this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true, ſome ſins have been committed not ſo much upon the force of inclination, as to be conſentaneous to themſelves, to ſilence the upbraidings of their underſtandings for acting ſo unevenly, it being impoſſible to give a reaſonable account, why *this* and not *that*, or *that*; for when by *one bold wilful ſin* a man enter'd into a *ſtate of hoſtility* with God, 'tis not a *tenderneſs in all others* will make up the *breach*: and then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are diſclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the moſt advantage. The reſolv'd *Adulterer* could perhaps without much difficulty be juſt, but when he conſiders that that one *Helena* of his, will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent *niceneſs* to loſe a good prize, or diſmiſs his *covetouſneſs* while he reſolves to retain his *luſt*. The incorrigible *drunkard* could perchance eaſily enough be *chaſte*, but when he remembers that *drunkenneſs excludes*

cludes him from the Kingdom of Heaven: having made that sale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it: So *treacherous a gueſt* is any *one Sin* admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it deſpoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard its ſelf againſt any aſſailant; and be it *never ſo ſmall* a one, 'tis like thoſe *little thieves* which being put in at the window ſet the doors open to all the reſt.

BUT perhaps this *danger* may be thought in ſome degree warded by the *natural temper* and conſtitution of men, which neceſſarily renders them unapt to *contradictory vices*, and ſo will ſecure them at leaſt from ſo many as are diſagreeable to their Temper: but if this ſhould be granted, yet it confeſſedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: he that is as *wicked*, as his *complexion* can not only encline, but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmoſt number of ſins: but whatever we can ſuppoſe that to ſtrike off from the tale; yet in the ſecond place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defalk nothing of the weight; he that ſins to the height of his *appetite*, perhaps *power*, ſhall he be ever the more *innocent* becauſe there were ſome *nauſeated ſins* which he had not Self denial enough to commit. God abſolves us in proportion to the *rectitude* of our Wills, not the *niceneſs* of our Complexions: he that wills to purſue whatever he can find *guſtful*, how impious ſoever; ſhall it be *vertue* in him that ſome Sins are

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unſavoury and diſagreeing to his *Palate*; if it ſhould, there may ſo many extrinſick things be by Analogy brought in, either to ſwell or abate the accounts of our ſin, that we ſhall be much to ſeek in the eſtimate of it.

BUT in the third place, even theſe very averſions are no infallible preſervative, for if they happen to be more moderate and remiſs, than the love of ſome other ſin; that *predominant inclination* will ſubdue thoſe *diſlikes*, when ever its *intereſt* is to be ſerv'd, by thoſe otherwiſe not *guſtful commiſſions*. There is nothing more ordinary than to ſee one appetite purſued to the violation of another. A man perhaps hates *drunkenneſs*, not only as a *beſtial*, but *uneaſie vice*; yet if his *love* to Gain exceed his *diſlike* to that; when that is requiſite to make up the price of a *good bargain*, that *averſion* muſt ſtoop, and give way. A man deſpiſes *ſwearing*, as an *inſipid impertinent Sin*, yet if he ſet any great value upon *being in the mode*, and complying with the *gentile Dialect*, that will ſoon debaſe him to what he ſo much contemn'd: and truly there is ſcarce any other account to be given of that great and fooliſh ſin. But in no other inſtance is this ſo notoriouſly viſible as in that of *duelling*. I need not ſingle out any one mans particular inclination, the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing and being kill'd: yet when that *Phantaſm*, that *Chimera* honour, has once poſſeſt the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head againſt it: but it commands as uncontroul'dly

troul'dly, as the *Centurion* in the Gospel, *sayes to this man go and he goes, to another come and he comes*: nay as Tyrannically as the great *Cham* of *Tartary*, who as an Essay of his Soveraignty *commands whole troops to ride down precipices*; nay these Aversions are not only thus violently subdued by some foraign *lust*, but are many times destroy'd even by *force* of that very *vicious principle* which gave them *birth*: for we mistake if we think they are alwaies vertuous, or so much as innocently founded; Vice is often at civil wars with its self; and the vehement *inclination* to one, ingenders a *displacency* to another; but yet such a *riddle* is this *mystery of Iniquity*, that upon the very same *basis* is built both the *abhorrence* and *commission* of the same Sin. *For example*, a Proud man as much hates to *fawn* and *flatter others*, as he loves to be flatter'd himself; yet let his *pride* but once work the other way, and set him upon an *ambitious project*, then all the mean condescentions imaginable are with ease digested, he can crouch and prostrate, and as the *Psalmist* speaks, *fall down and humble himself*, that by that descent he may rebound to the height he aims at: but still pride is the common cause of these so distant effects. In like manner the Riotous Prodigal detests *covetousness*, looks upon it as so sordid and base, that he brands even *prudent frugality* as approaching too near it; yet let him but once find the *springs* to grow dry which should feed his *luxury*; when he feels his Riot begins to exhaust and prey upon its self, then

then even that *deſpiſed Covetouſneſs* ſhall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *mettal* for the Furnace to melt, and ſo by a ſtrange *Antiperiſtaſis*, *prodigality* ſhall beget *rapine*. Thus unhappily *prolifick* is every Sin, that it carries in its bowels the *ſeed* and *principle* even of thoſe that ſeem the moſt *Heterogeneous*; and then how ſhall a man that has admitted but any one ſuch teeming luſt be ſecur'd that it ſhall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a meer *deſart*, fill'd with all ſorts of *wild* and *noxious creatures*.

THERE is but *one hope* imaginable to interpoſe, and that is that *Gods grace* ſhall prevent this exorbitant *growth of impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is ſufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has ſo, it will uniformly ſuppreſs *all ſin*, and therefore where *any one* continues in Force and Vigour, 'tis manifeſt that *operation* of Grace is obſtructed, and ſuch a man I ſhould deſire ſoberly to conſider what aſſurance he has, that he who has ſo evacuated Gods grace in one inſtance, ſhall not do ſo in another? If *in ſpight* of that grace he can be luſtful, why ſhall he not be as able to reſiſt it *in favour* of Drunkenneſs, Sacriledge, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he ſhall at any time have appetite. Can he imagine that God ſends forth an irreſiſtible ſtrength againſt ſome ſins, whileſt in others he permits men a power of repelling his Grace? That were to tranſcribe the *Syrians* abſurd Phanſie, that he is *a God of the hills and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own unhappy

unhappy experience to attest the possibility of frustrating the Divine succours in one particular, has too sure grounds to infer the like in others. Nay alas, it does not only infer it by way of *argument* and *deduction*, but it is very apt to produce it by way of *cause* and *efficiency*: We gain a readiness to any thing by custom and assuefaction, and he who has habitually oppos'd *Grace* in the defence of a *Lust*, has deliver'd himself from that modesty which makes the first defiance uneasie, and so runs on with ease and boldness to future resistance. It faring with men in this violation of *Gods grace* as it does in that of his *Patrimony*, the first Sacriledge is lookt on with some horrour, and men are fain to devise *arguments* and colours to delude their reluctting *Consciences*; but when they have once made the breach, their scrupulosity soon retires; one draught of that *impious gain*, has such a *stupifying effect*, that they can without check swallow on, till the Sin flame so fiercely, that nothing but meer want of Matter can extinguish it. But admit it were possible for a man to be secur'd of his own compliance with some parts of restraining grace whilest he impugnes it in others, yet who shall ascertain him of that grace? It being Gods, implies 'tis not in our power, he may surely do what he will with his own, and though his *promise* has made a sure *entail* of it to all those, who *humbly seek* and *diligently use* it: yet it no where engages that it shall be the *portion* of any other; much less that it shall importunately and endlesly renew its assaults on those

thoſe who have often repulſt and put it to flight: In that caſe *Gods reſolution* concerning the *old world* becomes appliable, *My ſpirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man*; and *Chriſt* who forbids us to *caſt our pearls before ſwine*, will certainly never proſtitute what is infinitely more precious, his *Grace* to thoſe, who have ſo long trampled it under their feet; and ſo thoſe muſt be concluded to have done, who have perſevered in any one ſin: for Grace is uniformly oppoſite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are expreſs in this matter: The *Talent* is decreed to be taken from the *unprofitable ſervant*, who has not imployed it to the proper uſe, and ſuch infallibly is *every man* who has not actuated the *Grace* given him to the ſubduing of every *reigning ſin*; and the *reprobate mind* mention'd in Scripture as the moſt diſmal of all Plagues, the νοῦς ἀδόκιμος, which yields not to the melting and the purging force of Fire, and therefore does conſign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular inſtances, *Rom.* 1. How then can he, that in any one ſingle thing ſo rejects him, aſſure himſelf that ſhall not be the event of it: That he who would not have Chriſt rule entirely in his *heart*, ſhall at once be put out of his *Government* and *protection*: have all thoſe ſpiritual aids withdrawn, which ſhould either aſſiſt him to *good*, or fortifie him againſt *ill*; and like an outlaw'd perſon be expos'd to the outrage of all that will aſſault him.

AND

AND now would God this might be sadly pondered, that men would not be their own *Sirens*, and entertain themselves with those deceitful *melodies*, which will end in *howlings and gnashings of teeth*; that they would not think their having some few vertues, and but some few vices will serve to satisfie the design, or procure them the rewards of their Christianity: for if they should continue in this posture, and not be tempted to grow worse, they may certainly conclude 'tis because Satan finds they need not. And can they be *proud* of that Vertue which the Devil himself will allow them? And think themselves *good* enough when they are as bad as he wishes them? But even in this they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleases for his interest, or even for his divertisement and recreation he may hurry them to all that is most enormous; convert their *Hypocrisie* to *profaneness*, their *partial* Piety to *universal* Ungodliness; they have nothing to interpose in their own Defence, not so much as a reasonable Argument to oppose to him, they have made a voluntary sale of themselves for one or more beloved sin, and now as his *vassals* he may impose on them what others he pleases: and by their doting affection to their *Rachel* take advantage also to obtrude the despis'd *Leah* upon them. And how wretched, how deplorable is this state? What a *Piety* is this that we must owe to the *Devil*, while we can be no better than he will let us?

YET this is without *Hyperbole*, the condition

of every man that is not sincerely uniformly Christian; every indulg'd sin gives *Satan* livery and seisin of his heart, and a power to dispose of it as he please. I know men are apt to flatter themselves with other hopes, and think that those obediences they pay to God shall like a pre-ingagement disannul all after contracts made by guilt, and put them into the possession of Him who is able to *bind* that *strong man*. But God will not be accessary to such a fraud, even towards the Devil while they keep the price, enjoy that pleasure or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpose to defeat him of his purchase.

AND as God will not thus forcibly wrest them out of his hands, much less will he descend to a capitulation and composition with him. *God is a jealous God*, and what *jealous husband* did ever by compact divide his right with the *Adulterer*. Where he finds a persevering disloyalty he gives a bill of divorce and disclaims his relation. Yet so besotted are men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the rest; and as competitors use sometimes to do, share with his Rival. But alas that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between these irreconcilable *Antagonists* will not be so compremised. God disdains such a Treaty, nor will ever come so much as to an interview with his enemy, within the lists and recesses of one Heart. And while men labour such an accord, they are but combining

combining with *Satan* against *God* and their own *Souls*: he knows well that while he holds any part, God will have none, and so the whole falls to him, and then he may very safely be modest, and demand but moderately, and by that seeming difference and yielding, gain more than by all his most eager contendings. I suppose every man will disown the having this ridiculous design of compounding the strife between *Heaven* and *Hell*; but certainly it is the natural interpretation of such partial obediences, when two *Litigants* contend for something which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude I desire to compose the dispute and satisfie both parties, and is not this the very case here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very absurd sound, but then how more absurd is it for men to act at such a rate, that when 'tis represented to them in the truest colours, themselves are ashamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them to put themselves out of the lash of their own discipline: to recover such an innocence that they may not be forc't with *David* to sentence themselves, when that their crimes appear in the light disguise of a *Parable*.

AND this indeed is the only proper use of all these considerations, the danger and folly are as *unuseful* as *unpleasant* speculations, unless it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let men consider themselves, as engaged in those wild projects which even themselves look on with scorn; as ensnar'd in that unhappy

contract which has rendred them part of the *Devils* poſſeſſion, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and diſentangle their Mortgag'd Souls.

AND for this there is but one way imaginable, and that is by quitting their hands of that which they took as the valuable conſideration in that mad bargain; reſtoring *Satans* coyn to him, not only *principal* but *uſe* alſo: caſting away the main ſin and all the little appendages, which like offeſets have ſhot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impreſs upon it, that ſo he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to diſſeiſe him of his Eſtate, to cancel thoſe fatal Indentures which bound them to him, and till this be done, as long as they keep any part of his *wages of iniquity*, his title remains in full force, they are ſtill his *ſervants*, his *vaſſals*.

EVEN that *redemption of Chriſt* has no efficacy towards the enfranchizing of ſuch, for though it proclaim a univerſal *Jubile*, yet it forces liberty upon none, he that will nail his Ear to the door-poſt and defie a manumiſſion, may continue his ſlaviſh ſtate ſtill, and indeed though Chriſts death was deſign'd to reſcue us from the power of Satan; yet the firſt eſſay of that reſcue was to redeem us from our vain converſation: And where that is not done, which is ſo eſſentially fundamental to all the reſt, 'tis not poſſible any other part of that Redemption ſhould be atchiev'd,

chiev'd, unless we will confound the order of *Nature* as well as *Grace*, and make the *consequent* precede the *antecedent*.

LET no man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his security, but pay back the *earnest-penny* he has received from *Satan*, fling away his *sin*, how pleasant or profitable soever, with the greatest Abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the *price of blood*, and that not only his *Saviours*, but his *own* too; and this immediately, lest the forfeiture be irreversible. We know the danger of lapsing time in case of Mortgage, but here our danger is greater, because the time is so uncertain, for though God had nothing else to do in the whole transaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that assigns the time of forfeiture: he alone knows how far we may go in sin, before we pass the possibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd before he suffer his whole displeasure to arise; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are to which his desertions are apportion'd. *Pharaohs* heart was hardened by God after the *Eighth resistance*, and we have no security but ours may be *sooner*: yet if that should be taken as the standing measure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has espoused any one *beloved sin*, that has not much oftner repeated the *acts* of it, every one of which is a resistance and a contumacy against God? Who is there that has not done it against so many express warnings and loud calls of God in his own

Conſcience, which renders it yet a fuller *parallel,* and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the laſt and higheſt circumſtance, that of the *Plagues* too, by an obſtinate perſiſting after ſo many *Judgements* ſent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the *premiſes* are the ſame, 'tis too likely the *concluſion* may be ſo alſo.

I SHALL not wiſh any Perſon ſo ſtrictly to apply this caſe, as to conclude, that he is already in this ſtate, but I ſhould wiſh all men would apply it ſo far, as to infer how *poſſible,* nay how *probable* it is, that the very next reſiſtance ſhall put them in it. 'Tis not *Pharaohs* being a *Heathen* and they *Chriſtians* that will give them any ſecurity; it being no part of the Goſpel-Covenant, that men ſhall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other ſide; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and conſequently, the fewer acts may now ſerve to fill up the meaſure. And if their experience teſtifie to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long ſuffering, than he has given any grounds to expect, if the guilt of their Conſciences teſtifie that they have committed many more acts; and yet ſome remaining tenderneſſes and regrets witneſs alſo, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardneſs and obduration, O let them not preſume themſelves ſafe, becauſe they are not utterly deſperate; but lay their hearts open to be ſtampt and impreſt by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely conſider what is the deſign

design of this *longanimity*, and without any more struglings and resistance suffer it to attain its aim and *lead them to repentance.*

FOR though their Souls be not yet wholly petrified, yet how know they in what an instant that unhappy *Metamorphosis* may be wrought, or if it should not be so sudden, yet 'tis certain every act of sin makes gradual approaches towards it: so that if God should not inflict it by way of *punishment*, yet the meer force of Habit would produce it by way of *natural efficacy*: And to be convinc'd of this, I should require no more, but that men would reflect, and see what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanc'd towards that fatal point. Let them send their thoughts back through every stage and period of their sin, and observe whether as that has grown, so their tenderness and reluctance of Conscience has not abated and decreas'd: Let them but recollect what regrets and disquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the first unlawful commission, and compare it with their present, and I doubt not they will discern a great inequality; they will find that every act of sin hath allayed somewhat of the sharpness of those pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward insensible: and then let him whose older Habit has multiplied those *Acts*, sadly consider how few *steps* he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinsick concurrent should hasten his pace. But when Gods desertion shall, as for ought he knows, it may the

next minute ſupervene: that as a full and violent *Wind* drives him in an inſtant, not to the *Harbour*, but on the *Rock* where he will be irrecoverably ſplit.

NOR let any man fortifie himſelf againſt theſe terrors, by hoping that his one *ſingle* (perhaps ſmall) *ſin* ſhall not have this deſtructive force; for if it be *wilful* it carries in it that which is properly the *malignity* of all ſin, to wit, a reſiſtance and oppoſition againſt God, and this is ſo *mortal* a Venome, that the leaſt Doſe of it is *deadly*, as a man may as certainly be poiſon'd by a *dram of Arſenick*, as with the *largeſt draught*.

THE more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a ſingle or petty ſin, 'tis ſo much the eaſier to part with; he that is bound with a *ſtrong Cable*, or with a multitude of leſſer Cords, may pretend ſome *neceſſity* of his Captivity from the ſtrength of his bonds; but he that is tied with *one ſlender ſtring*, ſuch as one reſolute ſtruggle would be ſure to break: he is *priſoner* only to his own *ſloth* or humour, and who will pity his *thraldom*, where 'tis ſo apparently his *choice*? Do not therefore ſay my ſin is inconſiderable and therefore I need not *relinquiſh* it, but my ſin is inconſiderable therefore I need not *keep* it. So ſlight a pleaſure I may part with and find no miſs: this pedling profit I may reſign and 'twill be no breach in my Eſtate. And if *Chriſt* require a renunciation of *thoſe ſins* which are as the *Hand and Eye*, ſhall I ſcruple to depoſite *thoſe* which are but as the *Hair or Nails*.

NAY

NAY he may yet argue higher, and from the ſmalneſs of the ſin deduce the enhanſement of the Guilt: great acquiſitions carry ſome temptation in their face, but deſpicable prizes do rather avert than tempt. 'Twas the ſign of a *common harlot* to be *hired with a Kid, Gen.* 38. and ſure he muſt be of a ſtrange proſtitute Soul, that can adulterate for ſuch low trivial wages. To diſhonour God, though the *whole world* were to be acquir'd by it, were *great impiety*, but to do it for *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread, Ezek.* 13. 19. himſelf brands as a yet higher pitch. And ſure it argues a very light eſteem of God, when one poor contemptible luſt ſhall be able to overpoize him in our hearts.

NOR is the *folly* leſs than the *profaneneſs*, when there is but one *Jonah* to be caſt over-board, 'tis the greater madneſs to hazard a *wrack*; and let ſuch a man pretend what he pleaſes in extenuation of his ſin, make that appear never ſo minute and deſpicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other men ſcatter and diſtribute upon ſeveral, he has united and concentred in this one luſt. The moſt *doting affection* when it is ſummed up can amount to no more than *this*, that it makes a man expoſe himſelf to the greateſt *pain*, the greateſt *loſs* for the thing beloved. And this is moſt viſible here, *Hell* is as certainly acquir'd, and *Heaven* as certainly forfeited by *one* ſin as *many*; and then though there may be odds in other reſpects, yet what is there in this, between this more *modeſt* and the moſt *licentious* Sinner, but

that

that the *former* puts the ſame value upon one, that the *other* does upon many ſins, and ſells his Soul ſo much the cheaper.

AND now would God ſuch men would review their *bargain*, ſoberly conſider what there is in this *Idoliz'd ſin* of theirs, which ſhould exact ſuch *coſtly ſacrifices*. Let him whoſe long intimacy and experience has given him acceſs to its moſt ſecret receſſes, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmoſt whether of pleaſure or profit that lies there conceal'd. Let him I ſay, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact inventory of its wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and *momentary Pleaſures*, with thoſe moſt tranſcending and *perpetual Joys* which are *at Gods right hand*; its baſe and periſhing commodities, with thoſe unfailing treaſures in the Heaven; and then judge of his purchaſe in reſpect of that part of his prize: And if that be not convincement enough, let him weigh the other alſo; thoſe ſad *pains* which are too *intolerable* to be ſuffer'd, and yet ſo *eternal*, that they can never ceaſe to be ſuffer'd, and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleaſure, whoſe guſt is ſo little, and whoſe duration is leſs: or what *profit* he will have in the revenue of his ſin, that *Gold and Silver* which will finally *eat his fleſh as it were fire*, *Ja.* 5. 3. and prove the unhappy *fuel of his flames*.

FROM all theſe *premiſſes*, certainly Reaſon and Religion do equally infer the ſame *concluſion*, to wit, that men ſhould not tolerate themſelves one

one minute in any known sin of how small a size soever it be; nor so impertinently betray their Souls to ruine for that which they call light and trivial; and is so indeed in respect of the *acqueſt*, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the *effects* and pernicious consequents. And O that mens practices might evince them to have made this just deduction, that those who have in many things preserv'd an *innocence*, would not be so ill husbands as to forfeit all the *advantage* of that Care for want of extending it a little farther, nor suffer the whiter parts of their Soul to be discolour'd or tincted by the reflection of one crimson sin; but rather let their tears wash that into a whiteness, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite *Son*, or so much as *Servant* that he finds so arrayed. The *followers of the Lamb* are all clad in *white*, and in that attire we must be sure to put our selves if we mean to go in with him to the *marriage*. And since the Gospel is the invitation to that feast, let none imagine he has complied with it till he have thus fitted himself: till then he affronts and *baffles* his Christianity, sends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worse *prostitutes* and profanes it, makes it serve only for a *Gourd*, that he may sit under the shadow of it, and commit his sins the more undisturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that *worm*, which will smite this *Gourd*, and leave him unsheltred to that scorching

ing *wrath* of God, which will make the improvement of *Jonahs* paſſionate Wiſh, that God would take away his life, his moſt rational Deſire; render not Death only, but Annihilation alſo, as *eligible* as it will be *impoſſible*.

CHAP. VII.

A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Repentance.

ANOTHER dangerous Underminer of Chriſtian Practice is the many affected miſtakes in the buſineſs of *Repentance*. Men look upon that as the grand *recipe* of the Goſpel, an infallible *Catholicon* againſt all their ſpiritual *maladies*; and ſo far they judge right, for ſo indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this ſovereign *Medicine* for their own uſe, they do it moſt deceitfully; leave out the principal and moſt operative *ingredients*: and by being ſuch ill *Apothecaries* defame the Goſpel as the *Diſpenſatory*, and *Chriſt* as the *Phyſician*, and likewiſe ruine themſelves as the *Patients*. But of thoſe who make this imperfect and Defective *compoſition*, all do it not alike; ſome leave out one part, ſome another, and ſome ſo many that they retain nothing of its ſubſtance and reality. Eat out all the *heart* and vertue of it, and leave only an empty *ſhell*, the gilding as it were of the *Pill*, the

the Form and meer outside of *Repentance.*

IN this later rank I place those who suffer *repentance* to pass no farther than their Frontiers, and Outworks; assign it its quarters in the *superficies* of the man, the *Face,* or *Tongue,* or *Gesture*; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it send but one serious thought to alarm the heart, then like the *Edomites* against *Israel, Num.* 20. all the forces are mustered to impede its passage; such *formal* Penitents as these all ages have produc't. Christ tells of those who *disfigured their faces,* Mat. 6. 16. put on as it were a vizard only to act this part: and *Esay* 58. 5. long before describes them, by the *bowing down the head like a bull-rush,* and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our daies; a demure or rather a lugubrious *look,* a sad or whining *tone,* makes up, 'tis to be fear'd, the *sum* of many mens Humiliations. Nay as the world has of late gone, that alone were but a modest pretence: such theatrical *forms* stickle hard for the *prize,* not of that one part but of all religion: a *distorted countenance* is made the Mark of an *upright heart,* and none is thought to speak the Language of *Canaan,* that dresses it not in an uncooth sound: and then what wonder is it that they are impatient others should *worship God,* as *David* invites, *in the beauty,* while themselves chuse to do it in the Deformity *of holiness.*

BUT

BUT others make ſomewhat a fairer advance towards *repentance*, by taking in ſome of thoſe things which are indeed its *neceſſary concomitants*; of this kind is in the firſt place *confeſſion of Sin*: and this after ſome ſort is ſtuck at by few; no man who hath not herded himſelf with the worſt ſort of *Fanaticks*, imagines himſelf ſinleſs, or pretends to be thought ſo by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the world that he is a *ſinner*: and as to *men*, ſo eſpecially and more ſolemnly to *God*. Every man that but offers at praying at all, thinks confeſſion a neceſſary Branch of his devotion: all publick *forms* have ever carried that in the *front*, as ſuppoſing it the moſt principal, univerſal, and daily requiſite to the lapſing ſtate of humane corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate perſwaſion of this, that hath ſecur'd that part of our *Liturgy*, from thoſe impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at moſt other members of it. And I ſuppoſe this is as frequent in the *Cloſet* as in the *Church*: the only fear is, that there it is as looſe and general too: that thoſe private and particular guilts which are neither fit nor poſſible to be diſtinctly inſerted in *publick*, do many times loſe their place even in *private* Confeſſions alſo. The ſhortneſs and the eaſe of general forms being very likely to recommend them to thoſe whoſe numerous ſins threaten too great a length, and whoſe confus'd ſnarl'd conſciences render it difficult, thus to pull out thread by thread: but where *Sins* are thus moulded up in a

lump,

lump, they will like great *masses of Pills* or confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their *strength* and *vigor*. So that *such* Confessions are very indulgent to *Satans interest*, who fears not the impressions that can be made upon him, while his *body* remains entire: the great execution then beginning when 'tis broken and scatter'd, and each sin is singled out for a particular pursuit: and where that is not attempted, the war can never be successful, nor thought in earnest.

BUT suppose this be done; and by exact enumeration, each sin is parted from its fellows, as when a *conqueror* pursues the *flying troops* of routed Enemies: yet if this be all, if *quarter* be allowed, and any mercy given, no *real prize* is gain'd by this atchievement. He who recounts his sins with milder purpose towards them than utter excision, he makes no approach towards the essential part of Repentance. He may bring out large *Catalogues* of his sins, and call them *confessions*; but he may better express his own sense, if he term them rather *inventories* of his goods, for such 'tis apparent he reckons them, whilest he resolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more absurd piece of *Pageantry*, than these *formal* Confessions, and such as shews how little, *God* is consider'd in his great Attribute *the searcher of hearts*. 'Tis certain no man would hope to attone an offended superior, by a submiss acknowledgment of his fault, did he know that his purpose of reiterating it were discern'd:

diſcern'd: and what a tacite *blaſphemy* is it then, to treat *God* at ſuch a rate as preſumes him as *deceivable* as a poor *Mortal*; and ſure this were a ſtrange Ingredient in *repentance*. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety boaſtingly to avow our ſins, and it deſerves to be conſider'd whether this kind of confeſſing them have not ſome affinity with it. Should I tell a man I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and ſo I reſolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common conſtruction, whether this were not to *juſtifie*, not *retract* the unkindneſs. Now what I ſuppoſe thus ſaid to man, is in the ſecret purpoſe of our heart, no leſs articulately ſpoken to God, who needs not our words to diſcern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to *repeat* his ſins, nay does not ſeriouſly intend to *forſake* them, does in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly ſoever his Tongue accuſes it. And ſuch *clamors* are but like the feigned Quarrels of combin'd *cheats*, in order to delude ſome third perſon. But alaſs, the ſcene is here unluckily laid, for God will not be mock'd, nor will the *Mercy* promis'd to him that confeſſeth and *forſaketh*, ever reach him that confeſſeth and *retaineth*. Confeſſion is no farther acceptable than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of Sin, and abſtracted from thoſe qualifications it becomes loathſome and diſtaſteful to God. Alaſs, can we think our *Hiſtorical* vein ſo pleaſant, that he ſhall be delighted with the *narrative* of thoſe crimes, whoſe perpe-

perpetration he detested. Can it be *Incense* in his nostrils, to have our *Dunghils* displayed? or can his pure eyes be gratified with such polluted prospects? True indeed, he gladly descends to all this as a *Physician*; nauseats not our *foulest ulcers*, when we bring them for *cure*: but when like *beggars* we make them openly our form of address, and dread nothing more than their *healing*; certainly their View will only excite his *indignation*, not his *pity*. And this, 'tis to be fear'd abodes sadly to many of us, 'tis our vulgar Objection to the *Romanist*, that they make their confessions contributive rather to their *confidence* than to their *reformation*: what their share is in that guilt, I shall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce they have not enclos'd it, that black circle of Sin and *confess*, Confess and *sin*, encompasses as well *Protestants* as *Papists*; if possibly not quite so many, the cause 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boast) not that More of us confess *aright*, but that Fewer confess *at all*. But of those that do, if we may but cross, examine, and interrogate their *actions* against their *words*, these will soon confess (and that not *auricularly*, but in a loud and audible voice) the *invalidity* of their solemnest Confessions. When we see a man that *yesterday* kept a Humiliation, *to day* trampling on the necks, invading the possessions of his Brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly, he confessed his Pride, or Covetousness; and the like

we may infer when we ſee any man perſevere in any groſs wilful ſin. And of ſuch, God knows there are ſuch multitudes, as will give us inſtances more than enough, how wide a difference there is, between a *meer Confitent* & a *true Penitent*.

BUT in the next place, a *paſſionate regret* at Sin, a *grief* and *ſadneſs* at its Memory, more ſpeciouſly pretends to enter us into Gods roll of *Mourners*: Sorrow has (in vulgar acceptation) ſo engroſt the whole notion of repentance, that men are apt to ſecure themſelves, that the Wind of a penitential *Sigh* is ſo mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the moſt mountainous *Sin*: that if they have but *wept* a little upon their crimes, they have quite *extinguiſht* the wrath they kindled: but alas theſe are vain dreams, *God* who *delights not to grieve the children of men*, does not project for our ſorrow, but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to meer *Animals* to ſhun that by which they have ſmarted, and therefore ſorrow for ſin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: but if we have learnt the unhappy skill of ſeparating the *effect* from the *cauſe*, if our Grief abate not our Love; if we can caſt kind looks at our ſins, even through thoſe Tears wherewith our Eyes are glas'd, this will ſure be as far from accompliſhing our deſign, as Gods: leave us equally unpardon'd, as unreform'd.

NAY alaſs, ſuch Sorrows as theſe will rather ſerve to *enhanſe* than *Expiate* our guilts; they

they are loud witnesses against us that we know the malignity of those sins we commit; that we have pois'd them, and find them as a *talent of lead* upon our Souls, and yet prefer them before Christs *light burthen*: that we have outvied that perverse Election wherewith *Elihu* charges *Job*, and chosen *affliction* rather than *innocence*, Job 36. 21. and though we have felt the *gnawing of the Worm*, yet still resolve to cherish it, till it gain its woful Concomitant of *unquenchable fire*, and sure this resolvedness, this high *fortitude* in Sin, can with no reason be imagin'd a preparative to its remission, 'twill rather serve to list us among Satans *Martyrs*, than Gods *Penitents*.

AND indeed if we examine the original of this kind of Sorrow, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? alas, 'tis apparent there is no dislike to the sin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have faln into the mire, common reason directs me, not to sit down and cry that I am so defiled; but to cleanse and wash my self, and beware of such another misadventure. Now Gods enmity is purely with the sin: and if we think to contract a league with him; we must espouse his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this case 'tis quite otherwise, we dislike only the *consequence*, not the *crime*; are dissatisfied to see that what is so pleasant, will not be safe: detest those temporal or eternal miseries, which God has annext to it: which is upon the matter to grieve, not because

we are *guilty*, but God is *juſt*; and to avert only that part of the *evil*, of which he owns to be the author, that of *Puniſhment*: whileſt that of *Sin*, as our own creature we dandle and careſs. And can we think it ſufficient to atone an incenſed Majeſty, that we love our own eaſe, while yet we love our ſin ſo much better? is it a *vertue* to have ſome ineffective regrets to damnation, and ſuch a Vertue too, as ſhall ſerve to ballance all our vices? this were indeed a compendious courſe to block up Hell gates, and leave none a poſſibility of ever getting thither, but thoſe who ſcaled the wall and deſperately reſolved to poſſeſs themſelves of that place of *Torment*. But alaſs, they are other *fruits* of Repentance that muſt *deliver* us *from the wrath to come*: for though I deny not, that the *apprehenſion* of Danger, is extreamly both reaſonable and uſeful, yet 'tis only by way of *preparative*: 'tis like the *Trumpet* that gives the *Alarm*, and ſets us to the *battail*, but it muſt not pretend to be like thoſe of *Gideon* that atchiev'd the whole victory. To ſee our *danger*, may occaſion, but does not cauſe, or neceſſarily infer an *eſcape*. I may madly leap into that pit which I ſee gaping to ſwallow me, and then my *fore-ſight* ſerves only to render me my own *murderer*. In ſhort, if that formidable aſpect of our Sins, make us run from them, it has done us the happieſt office; *pluckt us* as S. *Jude* ſays, *out of the fire*: but if our love be ſo doting, as to counter-charm our fear; if we be ſo bewitcht with the *deceitfulneſs of ſin*, that we will

will have its Embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have sinn'd, and yet go on to sin; our wilful *Guilt* will defile our *Tears*, but our tears will never cleanse our guilt. We only assist in the judicature against our selves; and to Gods condemnation add our own: and what we call our Penitence, becomes a sad Attestation of our Incorrigibleness.

AND as this *meer Sorrow* will never avail, so neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in respect of the *kind*, or of the *Duration*: to the former we have spoken elsewhere, and shall not need to repeat: but of the later there will need no less caution; men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themselves in this as much as in the other. Every transient *gleam* of Piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghost descended, and though it want the main circumstance of resting on them, yet serves to personate the Comforter. He that whilest the soreness of his late pangs of *conscience* remains, finds himself a little indispos'd for a new career in sin, presently concludes *repentance* hath had its perfect work in him, made that *change* and transmutation, which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites extinct* and *mortified*: when alas they are but strew'd over with a little *penitential Ashes*, and will as soon as they meet with *combustible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever, and God knows the event does too often actually attest this after all

the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to diveſt themſelves of their white robe, and thoſe whom yeſterday you ſaw in the *laver*, to day you ſhall find wallowing in the *mire*: and as with far the more *guilt*, ſo ſometimes with much the greater *confidence*, for having been ſo waſht: yet ſo ſtrongly are ſome mens phancies poſſeſt with their imaginary purity, that they are the laſt that take notice how the ſcene is chang'd: they comfort themſelves, that ſin and they have had ſome little *skirmiſhes*, though but preparatory to a cloſer *league*; that they had fixt good purpoſes, though there remain nothing viſible but their violation; and ſo will call themſelves Chriſts *Sheep*, though their notorious impurities witneſs them to belong only to that *herd* into which the *Legion* entred.

THIS is a deceit which one would think ſhould immediately detect its ſelf, but 'tis ſtrange to ſee, how our *wiſhes* can preſcribe to our *faith*; and what a more than omnipotent power our ſelf-love has in reconciling contradictions: yet I can ſcarce think this innate ſtrength of corruption had been ſufficient for the purpoſe, had it not had the auxiliary aid of ſome commodious doctrines. My preſent deſign is ſo far from controverſial, that I am loth to point out any to which I muſt expreſs unkindneſs: yet upon this occaſion, I ſhall refer it to conſideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet *ſome* Conſciences, be not very apt to ſtupifie *more*. When I

ſee

see one who from his present reigning sins, regularly infers the illness of his state; that is yet by his Casuist, diverted from that prospect, and bid look back to see, whether no part of his life afforded any Evidence of true Grace, and if he can but remember any such time; is warranted to make that his *Epocha*, from whence to date his *infallible assurance*; is told that that *immortal seed*, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choaked; but will most certainly spring up unto *Eternal life*: When I say I see this easie remedy prescrib'd to his fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my self an *Antidote* from the same *Ingredients*: To fix my Eye upon some *mark* of Regeneration which at some time or other, I either have, or phancied to have had upon me, and with the stedfast beholding of that, as of the *brazen Serpent* be fortified against all the *venome of my fiery lusts*. Cast in this one stick, and with it sweeten all the waters of *Marah*, secure me against all the bitter effects of my present guilts. How fatal an influence such discourses as these are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cause, and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand Principle on which they are founded; since if that were admitted, yet it will not justifie the before mention'd Superstructure: for suppose it receiv'd as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be lost: yet 'tis, by the confession of all, so easie to be deceiv'd in judging what is so, and our partialities to our selves are so likely to betray us to that deceit; that these *Corallaries*

men deduce thence for their perſonal aſſurance, can never partake of the ſuppos'd infallibility of thoſe premiſes they derive from, and conſequently are much too ſlight a *baſis* for men to truſt with ſo great a *weight*, as is that of their *preſent comfort* and *future ſtate*.

SEVERAL other pernicious errors there are in the matter of *Repentance* which men fall into, ſhall I ſay, or rather aſpire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme Violence to their *reaſon* as well as *religion*, climb up to thoſe caſtles in the air, and there fortifie themſelves impregnably againſt all the ſacred Artillery of Divine threats. Their *falſe confidences* ſerve them as *feather-beds*, not only to ſleep ſecurely in, but to *dead all bullets* that are ſhot againſt them. But of all thoſe deceitful *refuges*, there is none more treacherous, & yet more confidently and univerſally reſorted to, than that of a *Repentance in reverſion*, to commence no body knows when, ſome moneths or years hence, when this buſineſs is diſpatcht, that luſt ſatiated; or indeed to bear the ſame date (if not a later) with their laſt Will and Teſtament. This is that unhappy retreat to which *thouſands fly* as the routed *Syrians* to *Aphek*, 1 *Kings* 20. 30. till they are entomb'd in that *wall*, whoſe ſhelter they ſolicited: How deſperate the hazard of ſuch procraſtination is, hath been ſo convincingly demonſtrated by better Pens; that *trumpet* hath been blowed ſo loud by all our ſpiritual *watchmen*, that there remains nothing ſeaſonable, but to wonder whence

men

men have got that *Lethe* which secures them their sleep in spight of that *Alarm*: and certainly 'tis matter of the greatest astonishment to observe the stupid, yet common boldness of men, who so fearlessly expose themselves to this most formidable of perils; who yet in things of far less danger and lighter consequence are so nicely timorous, that no security is thought enough, every the remotest danger to their outward concerns, excites their present vigilance to avert it: but here that order is most absurdly inverted, and the *present eminent danger* is assign'd and put off to their *future care*. Let the *Physician* tell them he observes some Symptomes of a latent *Malady*, some aptitudes or first Causes of a *Disease*; what hast is there made to meet that Enemy *in the frontiers*, before it advance too far? All Arts of prevention are us'd, and such uneasie *remedies* submitted to, as perhaps out-bid the *pain* of the Disease. In like manner let a *Lawyer* tell them he has spied some defect in an *entail*, which may perhaps in the next age give some interruption to their design of having their houses endure for ever, *Psal.* 47. how solicitous are they to repair that *error*, and leave nothing to the mercy of a *Law-quirk*? And in both cases thank the vigilant care of their informer that gave them notice of their danger: but let the *Divine* tell them he sees their Souls languishing under the most mortal diseases; that they have actually forfeited their *inheritance* in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; say, or at least think those cares are to be

be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient ſeaſon, that when their *Bodies* are as infirm as their *Souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That 'tis enough for their *ſpiritual* Life to commence when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for *everlaſting* Habitations, when they are putting off their *Earthly* Tabernacle: as for the thanks they give their *Monitor*, 'tis generally the ſame that St. *Paul* received from the *Galatians*, to count him their *enemy for telling them the truth*, *Gal.* 4. 16. but alaſs he has no reaſon to reſent the injury, ſince 'tis but the ſame they offer to their neareſt and moſt intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and Nature has placed within their own breaſts, I mean their *Conſcience*: let that at any time whiſper the ſame admonition, and immediately they cry out as *Ahab* to *Eliah*, *Haſt thou found me O my Enemy.* All arts are us'd to convey themſelves out of its Reach, Buſineſs, or Company, or Drink, or any thing is ſolicited to come in to their reſcue, that in that throng they may deceive its purſuit, or at leaſt in that louder noiſe drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their Enemy, while they ſhun it as a *Malefactor* does the *Officer*. Yet I appeal to the breaſts of thoſe, who lean upon the broken reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the caſe with them: let them tell me whether they dare truſt themſelves alone with their *Conſcience*, give it opportunity of ſpeaking freely to them, of laying before them the mad adventure they make of their precious *Souls*; which they do not only

expoſe

expose to as many hazards of a *swift damnation*, as there are accidents which may surprize their *bodies* with a *sudden death*; but do besides by this resistance repel and quench that *Spirit*, without which they can never hope to effect that so necessary, so difficult a *work*; nay, I may, I fear, ask some of them whether they have not so often shunned these parleys, that their *Consciences* like an *abus'd Friend*, has at last given them over, ceast to pursue them with more of those unwelcome importunities; and by its silence left them secur'd from all noise which may disturb that treacherous sleep into which they have lulled themselves. To those who are thus given up to the *spirit of slumber*, I cannot hope to speak loud enough to rouse them; but to those that are but of the former rank, that have not yet so prosper'd in their unkind design against themselves, as quite to have alienated their bosom friend, that are yet within the reach of those *amica verbera*, the stripes and reproofs of their own Conscience; to such I would address with this most affectionate *petition*, that they would not seek to remove themselves from that *wholsome discipline*; that they would not fly that *Chyrurgion* whose *Lancet* threatens none but the *impost humated parts*; but rather chuse to be shewed the formidableness of their Danger, than by a blind embracing it, to perish in it. And if they have but any general confus'd inclinations to this so reasonable a request, I shall then put on more solemnity, assume to come as an *Envoy* from those dreaded Consciences of theirs,

theirs, to *mediate* an enterview, to propoſe the fixing ſome time of parley, and beſpeak their *patience* to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do ſo much in order to their own ſafety, and I can ſcarce think it poſſible they ſhould after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruine. In a word, let men ſeriouſly and attentively liſten to that *voice* within them, and they will certainly need no other *medium*, to convince them either of the error or danger of thus procraſtinating their *Repentance*, which themſelves acknowledge muſt not upon their utmoſt peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate diſpatch can ſecure it ſhall not.

'TWILL be needleſs to deſcend to a particular view of more of theſe deceits, they will eaſily be detected by this one *general Rule*, that whatſoever falls ſhort of a preſent, univerſal, permanent Change, falls as much ſhort of *Repentance*. All the pretences that are made upon any other ſcore are but the Garments of the *elder brother* put upon the back of the *younger*, which though they might delude a blind *Iſaac*, will never be able to deceive an all-ſeeing *God*. All that remains is to offer to the Readers conſideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himſelf againſt all deluſions in this ſo important an affair. It was an ancient *Stratagem* of War to poiſon the waters in an Enemies Camp, that ſo they may drink their own deaths: but *Satan* has here far out-vied that *Policy*. Were but our Nouriſhment infected, we had ſtill a recourſe left us to Medicine, but here

here he has envenom'd our very Physick, and what *cure* remains for those whose very *remedies* are their *disease*: when that Bath which was design'd to cleanse us, is its self polluted, we may well cry out as *Dyonisius* of the corrupted River of *Alexandria*, ποῖον ῥόον ἂν πάντα καθαίρηλος ὕδατος ὕδωρ ἄλλο καθάρσιον, what Flood shall cleanse these Waters? Where can we be secure, when our *Repentance* (which the Apostle, 2 *Tim.* 2. 26. supposes the Means of disentangling us) is its self become our Snare. This as it loudly proclaims our *danger*, so surely in all reason it should awake our *care*, teach us not to suffer our selves to be abus'd with delusive appearances and shadows of *Repentance*, lest we finally find that *Ixion-like* we have embrac'd a Cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who presumes his Tears have blotted out the *hand-writing* against him; to find the full Bill brought in at the great Assize, and those he call'd his *penitential sorrows* here, to prove but the Prologue to that *Tragedy* which ends in *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. And therefore let every one timely provide against that fatal surprize, use this excellent receipt, not as a *Cosmetick* only to beautifie the face, give him some fair appearance to himself, but as *Medicine* to restore health; reduce him to such an *Athletick* vigorous Habit, as may evidence its self in all *vital* Actions, which will prove the best evidences in our last trial, where the inquisition will not be so much upon our Mouths or Eyes, as upon our Hands: not how many *confessions* we have made,

made, or how many *tears* ſhed, but what *acts* of Vertue we have ſubſtituted in the room of our Vices: whether we have broke off our Sins by *righteouſneſs*, and our Iniquities by *ſhewing mercy to the Poor*, and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Chriſtianity will be as ineffectual to our *Bliſs*, as it is to our *Piety*: if we will not permit it here to bring us to the *obedience* of Servants, it ſhall never inſtate us hereafter in the *inheritance* of Sons.

CHAP. VIII.

A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.

TO theſe Miſtakes of our ſelves and intereſts, we have added others alſo concerning God, which are no leſs deſtructive to Chriſtian Practice, for as the *right knowledge of God is by our Saviour, Jo.* 17. 3. put as the Epitome and ſumme of all that leads to *bliſs*, ſo our miſpriſions and miſapprehenſions of him, are no leſs remarkable for the contrary effects; nor can we ſuppoſe it otherwiſe, when we remember that this is the grand work and *baſis* of all Religion, and therefore if this *foundation* be deceitfully laid, the *ſuperſtructure* muſt neceſſarily ſink and periſh: and in this ſenſe 'tis poſſible for us at once to build on the *Rock* and the *Sand* too, we may fix our

our faith intentionally on God, and yet by absurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we establisht in the gross: represent him so utterly distant from what he is, that under that disguise he will not much appear, either an Encourager or Rewarder of our *Piety*, and then we may guess how 'tis like to flourish, since the Apostle gives it as a *Fundamental Axiome*, Heb. 12. 6. That *he who comes to God must believe that he is a rewarder of them which diligently seek him.*

OF these Mistakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the design'd brevity of this discourse will admit me to examine. I shall only mention *three*, those are, First, concerning his *Decrees*, Secondly, his *Attributes*, Thirdly, his *Providence*.

BY his *Decrees*, I mean not those standing *rules* which he has in his Word set forth as the *measures* by which he will distribute rewards and punishments; but those secret *purposes of his Will*, which he neither commands us to search after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many Mistakes concerning these, the numberless Disputes that have been rais'd about them will sufficiently attest, it being impossible for two Contradictory Opinions to be both *true*, though in things of this abstruse nature 'tis very possible both may be *false*. 'Tis not my purpose to wade into those bottomless controversies, which like a Gulph have swallowed up so much time and industry of learned men: I shall only in *general* commend

commend it to the Readers conſideration, whether it be probable or indeed poſſible for thoſe Opinions to be *true* which infer *falſhood* in God: And then let the ſecond enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the reſult of thoſe diſcourſes, which ſet an Oppoſition between his *revealed* and his *ſecret* Will, his Commands and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other, as if all the Tranſportation and Zeal he expreſſes *for* us, all the paſſionate enamoring invitations he makes *to* us, were only to ſport himſelf with our credulity: like the divertiſement of thoſe Men, who court them for Wives, whom they would abhor to marry: nay, as if all the proteſtations and moſt ſolemn oaths of God, were deſign'd but to advance the deluſion, and raiſe expectations meerly to defeat them. This is ſuch a ſevere ſort of *Irony*, as we would all think not only unkind but unjuſt in a man; and 'tis not poſſible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, ſhould fall ſhort of the ſtricteſt meaſures among us, or exemplifie to us an unſincerity he forbids us to follow.

HOW very inauſpicious influence ſuch *doctrines* are apt to have on *practice* is too viſible, for ſince 'tis as well the inſtinct as duty of our nature to aſpire to an aſſimulation with God, even that moſt laudable and generous ambition ſhall by this means become our ſnare; for when *God* ſhall be thus miſrepreſented to us, drawn out by the black Lines, not only of *ſeverity*, but *deceit*, rendred a Falſifier of his *Word*, nay *Oath*; 'twill give

give not only temptation but warrant to the like Practices: we shall easily swallow up all the particular commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himself has done both his commands and promises in his hidden Decrees. This is so natural a piece of *Logick*, that 'tis very unsafe men should be trusted with those *premises* whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over apt to transcribe that Copy God does really set us, yet this spurious one will not miss to be taken out: that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and spurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our Vices with our reputation, and sin *cum Privilegio*; and there is little doubt of mens aptness to use that advantage, we see it in lower instances. The *Vices* of a Prince draw shouls of followers, when his *vertue* leaves him the more eminent, because single, and renders him rather revered than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devils slighteſt *stratagems* on the *Gentile* world, to give them *such Gods* as might exemplifie to them all those *odious crimes*, wherein he desir'd to immerse them. Whether this may not be a *branch* of the same Illusion, I wish the Propugners of this doctrine would seriously consider.

AND as several *ills* are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, so is all *vertue* in general discouraged and disheartned; this benumbs us in our Christian course, substracts that spirit and vigour, which should carry us through the weary stages of duty: indeed it cuts the very *sinews* of

Induſtry, baffles and makes ridiculous all *purpoſes* of Labour; for what ſhould invite a man to ſtrive for that, from which he knows he is either irreverſibly precluded, or elſe ſo infallibly aſcertain'd, that his negligence cannot defeat him. Theſe are ſuch *extremes* as afford no *middle*, wherein the vertue of induſtry may exiſt, hope being equally out-dated by the deſperateneſs or unneceſſarineſs of an undertaking: and how neceſſary hope is to excite endeavour we may learn of St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 5. where he preſſes his *Corinthians* to the conſtancy of Chriſtian Practice upon this ground, that their *labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* But according to ſome mens doctrine, 'tis ſcarce poſſible for a man to know whether his labour be in vain or no; ſince the effect of it depends not upon the revealed *promiſe* but ſecret *purpoſe* of God, and who knows whether there may not lie ſome *dormant Decrees* againſt him, which when he thinks he has run his *race* ſhall yet defeat him of his *Crown.* Whether a reward thus ſtated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every man to judge by the like circumſtances in their *ſecular* concerns; and if they find they would there damp their courage, diſpirit and diſhearten them from attempting, there will be ſure more reaſon to conclude it in theſe *ſpiritual* Affairs, wherein our induſtry is commonly much leſs indefatigable.

BUT I ſhall not farther inſiſt on the ill conſequences of particular miſtakes; there is one *fundamental error*, which if it could be cured, would ſuperſede

ſuperſede all the reſt, I mean our bold Folly in *medling with Gods Decrees,* which we call hidden, and yet ridiculouſly confute that Epithet by pretending to know them. This is ſo much an inſolence as forfeits the compariſon, which might belong to it as an error; we ſee *ſecular States* jealouſly reſerve their *private Councils,* and ſhall we think God ſo ſcrutable, or our ſelves ſo penetrating, that none of his ſecrets can eſcape us: or if we think him, as indeed he is, *unfathomable,* why do we thus madly attempt what we confeſs *impoſſible*; eſpecially ſince we ſhall not only loſe the thing we ſo vainly purſue, but others which we might elſe enjoy. 'Tis as if a man ſhould be ſo tranſported with a buſie earneſtneſs of knowing his Princes *Secrets,* as quite to forget his *Laws,* and incurr capital puniſhment. God has given us *rules of life,* which upon the ſevereſt penalties he requires us to ſtudy and practice; and we divert from theſe, and make it our buſineſs to trace his *Counſels.* We are gazing at the *Stars* to read our deſtiny, and look not to our *feet*; and by that negligence experiment the worſt fate they could have portended: for I think we may ſay our wild *Phancies* about Gods Decrees, have in event reprobated more than thoſe *Decrees* upon which they are ſo willing to charge their ruine, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom thoſe left ſalvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from Divine Juſtice, that ſuch bold Inquiſitors ſhould find nothing but their own Deſtruction. That Ark which devoutly reverenced brought *bleſ-*

ſings, when curiouſly pried into diffus'd *Peſtilence* and *Death*, 1 *Sam.* 6. 19. Nay the very *Poets* will tell us, that if we will have *Prometheus* his Fire, we muſt take *Pandora*'s Box alſo: and ſure Induſtry cannot be worſe laid out than thus to fetch home *Plagues*, and while ſo much of it runs waſte to ſuch unhappy purpoſes, 'tis no wonder if we want for better; forget our *calling* by contemplating our *predeſtination*; and let the Opinion of our *fate* be at once the Encouragement and Excuſe of our *ſloth*, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpoſe and deſign of our Chriſtianity, which Divines have truly defin'd to be not a *contemplative* but *active* Science.

TO the ſame unhappy Effect concur our Miſtakes of *Gods Attributes*, if I may call them Miſtakes, which ſeem to be rather wilful Neſcience, they being ſo delineated to us both in his Word and his Providences, that 'tis not want of light, but winking againſt it that muſt leave us ignorant. What the *ſpeculative errors* are in this matter concerns not my preſent deſign to examine: but there ſeem to be ſome Miſperſwaſions concerning the *Divine Attributes*, which do remarkably tend in their conſequence and effect, to the corrupting *mens manners*; nay, look as if they were deſign'd, and affectedly choſen for that purpoſe; I mean eſpecially thoſe concerning his *Juſtice* and *Mercy*, which being the *Attributes* in which we have the moſt immediate Concern, the Errors in them are the more noxious and deſtructive. Of this ſort is that narrow ſcanty notion too

too many have of *Gods Justice*, which we measure not by *him* but *our selves*, and therefore proportion it not according to his *infinity*, but our own *concerns*. That is an Attribute from which we promise to our selves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and shrink it up, make it serve only as a *Cypher* to advance *mercy*, but are unwilling to understand it in its proper Extent; think it a *word of form* put in to compleat the greatness of Gods Stile, rather than any *intrinsick part of his nature*, which he must deny himself to put off.

THUS do we sacrilegiously steal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacrileges invade only his *patrimony*, this commits a riot upon his very *nature*, yet as if we meant the Proverb should indemnifie us, and *Exchange* extinguish the *Robbery*, we add to another attribute what we have defalct from this, and amplifie and extend his *Mercy*, as much as we confine and limit his *Justice*; that is the one infinite Ocean, wherein not only we, but himself must be swallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what shall be in subserviency to this: we will have him Powerful to *relieve* our Distresses, but not to *revenge* our Crimes; Wise to *defeat* the machinations of our Enemies, but not to *circumvent* our own indirect or impious Policies; All-seeing to *behold* our Wants and Griefs, but not to *discern* our closer Guilts; True to *perform* his Promises, but not his Threats. In short, we

model all that is in God to our own wiſhes; and inſtead of believing him what he is, phancy him what we would have him. Like *Micha*, Jud. 17. 5. *making* us *a God* for our own peculiar uſe, and forming the Deity we mean to worſhip. A ſtrange bold Inverſion, for Creatures thus to faſhion their Creator, put their own ſtamp and impreſs upon him, and ſhape him to their Phancies. And indeed 'tis nothing but *Phancy* that has to do in this Attempt, and accordingly it muſt vaniſh as the *operations* of that illuſive Faculty uſe to do. We may repreſent God to our ſelves as we pleaſe, but that has no more real *influence* on him, than a *deforming Optick-glaſs* has on the *Object* it diſguiſes, he is ſtill *the ſame* amidſt all our wilde conceits of him, and will alwaies make good the *title*, by which he deliver'd himſelf to *Moſes*, Ex. 3. 14. *I am that I am.* All that is in him is equally immenſe and infinite, his *mercy* need not invade his *juſtice* to gain its ſelf a larger field of action, which is already (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks) *over all his works*; neither his *juſtice* encroach upon his *mercy*, that having alſo a Province wide enough; all impenitent ſinners being within its Verge, and God knows how much ſoever we ſtreighten it in our *opinions*, we do it indeed too much extend it in its *real force*, by rendring our ſelves the proper objects of it. In ſhort, God who is the author of *order* and peace, cannot be ſuppos'd to be in *confuſion* within himſelf; the divine Attributes are not in *ſtrife*, but perfect *harmony*; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more than

than *Gygantick war*, not only *against* Heaven, but *in* it. The several *Luminaries* pursue the regular motions of the *Spheres*; but we confound at once the *Laws* of their Creation, and their *Author* too, strive to eclipse and darken *the father of light*. But if the removing of an earthly Land-mark be a crime punishable both by God and man, what Thunder-bolts belong to those who thus attempt to set new Boundaries in heaven, to limit and measure out even the *divine Nature* by the proportions of their own *Phancies*, and indeed such temerity as this, is too like to confute its self, and feel that Justice it will not believe: yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themselves of it: for though all avow it, yet he that shall narrowly search his own heart, will scarce find it clear from all degrees of it: We are all apt to cherish a *flattering hope*, that God is not so severe as he is represented, or that if in respect of his Justice he be *a consuming fire*, yet that Mercy will be sure to snatch us out of the *burning*; like the Angels to *Lot*, assist our Escapes, and provide us a *Zoar, that our souls may live*: and this Hope though founded only in our *wishes*, is very apt to slide into our *faith*, and make us believe what we would have: by which means this becomes a kind of *Epidemick* Heresie, the most frequent and common misperswasion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

IT would be a work more long than useful to recite the several errors that have sprung from

this one. That of *Origen*, that *the Devils ſhould finally be ſaved*, is a noted and pregnant Inſtance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehenſion of Gods Juſtice and Mercy: And beſides all other ancient, we have many branches of a later growth, that ſpring from the ſame root, a ſet of plauſible falſities, which would quench the *unquenchable Fire*, and kill the never *dying Worm*; I mean thoſe allaying ſoftning deſcriptions ſome of this age have made of Hell, ſome changing the *kind*, others abating the *intenſneſs*, or at leaſt the *duration* of thoſe Torments, each ſubſtracting ſo much from this *Tophet*, that they have left *Atheiſm* an eaſie task to take away the reſt: and may give ſuſpicion they mean to viſit that place, which they are ſo induſtrious to make eaſie.

BUT whatever they do *themſelves*, 'tis ſure this is the way to ſend *others* thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not ſo dreadful a place as they once ſuppos'd, and conſequently leſs careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that ſuch perſwaſions do mightily impugn Chriſtian practice, and embolden men in ſin: and God knows we need no ſuch encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of Mercy being too ſufficient for that purpoſe without theſe ſupernumerary deceits: but between the one and the other, *Libertiniſm* is like to outgrow all reſtraints, and the Opinion of *Gods goodneſs* inſtead of *leading men to repentance*, will ſlacken thoſe reigns where-

with

with our bruitish Nature should be bridled and restrain'd, and we thus left unto the sway of lust and passion, must run headlong upon ruine, *as the Horse rusheth into the Battel.* For alas, we are not so *generous* as to do well for Vertues sake, nay nor so *provident* as to do it for Reward, 'tis our fear that is the most prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find religion generally makes her first impressions there. They are *the terrors of the Lord* that do most usually, and most effectually *perswade men*, 2 Cor. 5. 11. our Hearts must be pricked, and at those Orifices piety enters. Now when all these terrors shall be superseded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when *Hell* shall either be annihilated, or suppos'd so to annihilate us, that we shall lose our passiveness with our being, and be as uncapable of suffering, as even *Heaven* its self can make us, what will be left to engage us to *vertue*, or deter us from *vice*: Alas, do we not often see a daring Lust bid *battel* to all the artillery of Heaven, meet *God* in his loudest Thunder, and venture on *damnation* in its dreadfullest form? and can we think it will be more modest, when it shall be told that they are only edgeless weapons it hath to encounter? that Gods Thunder amidst all its noise carries no *bolt*? and that the Flames of the bottomless pit, are but a *painted fire*, that at a distance may fright but not hurt us, or at least so hurt us, that we shall not feel it? When those rubs which fear interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to stay the course of headlong riot, but pre-

precipiciouſly it will on, where ever *ſtrong deſire* ſhall drive, or *flattering luſt* allure: he that loved his ſin, even when it threatned him *ruine*, ſerv'd it aſſiduouſly, when it promiſed no other wages than *death*, Rom. 6. 23. how will he hug this *viper* when he thinks 'tis ſtingleſs, and give up his ear to be bored by that *Maſter*, which affords him preſent pleaſures without future ſtripes: we ſee even in Civil matters the *preſumption* of Impunity is the great *nurſe* of Diſorders, and if it were not for the *coercive* power of Laws we ſhould ſoon ſee how little the *directive* would ſignifie; and doubtleſs 'tis the ſame in ſpiritual or rather worſe, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of Gods Laws than mens, and conſequently will be the more apprehenſive of any Encouragement.

OF the truth hereof our experience gives too ſad proof, none ruſhing ſo boldly upon Gods *juſtice*, as thoſe who have moſt fortified themſelves againſt the *dread* of it, as if they meant their *practice* ſhould experiment the truth of their *ſpeculation*, and make the utmoſt trial whether God can be provoked or no. Indeed men uſe *mercy* as amaz'd Paſſengers ſometimes do a *plank* in a ſhipwrack, lay ſo much weight upon it, as ſinks both it and themſelves; ſo periſhing by too great a confidence of their reſcue, and finding a *Gulph* where they expected an *Ark*: not that I ſuppoſe Mercy unable to ſupport the weight of all the *Perſons*, nay, and of all the *ſins* in the world, which have not the one ponderous *adherent* of Impenitence ſuperadded; but that

that is a burthen which even the divine *Clemency* ſinks under, refuſes to plead ſuch a cauſe, and refers it to *Juſtice* as its proper Court: And therefore to ſin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our ſelves, and commit a folly as abſurd as ruinous, I wiſh I could ſay 'twere not alſo as frequent: but God knows 'tis every where too apparent; men openly avow it, ſo that 'tis become the vulgar Anſwer to every convicting Reproof, that *God is merciful*: And ſurely they that obſerve the growth of vice, ſince our new deſcriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cauſe to think the one has had no ſmall influence on the other, and that while ſome have made it borrow the uneaſineſs of our humane ſtate to make up its torments; they have taken care it ſhould be juſt, and lend us back ſins of a greater magnitude: This miſerable traffique have theſe Factors ſetled, between the preſent world and the infernal region, that Hell ſhould have Earths *pains*, and Earth Hells *wickedneſs*; the later alas we are too fully poſſeſt of, which is like to ſend too many ſouls to diſcover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundleſs confidences of mercy, and thoſe other *Chimera's* we forge out of that, are certainly the moſt frequent and dangerous underminers of Chriſtian practice: theſe like the *Sun* give heat and vigor to thoſe inordinate luſts, which a juſt *fear of vengeance* would as a winters froſt nip, and deſtroy: And till we lay by theſe eaſie ſlight thoughts of God, and conſider him in thoſe more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his *mercy* will only

only ſerve to ripen us for his judgment, that ſmooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuſe it not is indeed the *oil of gladneſs*, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of Oil, ſerve only to intend our *flames*, and remove us as far from the *rewards* of Piety, as our bold *phancies* have done from the *practice*.

A third ſort of miſtakes there are by which Piety is obſtructed, and thoſe are ſuch as concern *Gods providence*, about which the world has long ſince had many diſputes; ſome entirely denying it, as preſuming God ſo wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he was utterly inconſiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd *ſpectator* of humane affairs; others limiting and reſtraining it to thoſe things only which themſelves were pleas'd to think worthy of the divine inſpection and conduct: But theſe queſtions have been more bandied among *Philoſophers* than *Chriſtians*, and therefore are beyond our preſent enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to expreſs my fears, that theſe errors have yet ſome ſecret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally *ſay*, then cordially *believe*, that God governs the World, and diſpoſes as well of *humane* as *divine* things; a ſuſpicion that is rendred too probable by thoſe indirect arts men uſe, to poſſeſs themſelves of ſecular advantages; for did they ſeriouſly think that all thoſe things are in Gods hands, from whence they are neither ſtrong nor cunning enough, either to wreſt or pilfer them,

them, 'tis scarce imaginable they should attempt such painful impossibilities, disquiet themselves in vain as the *Psalmist* speaks, and which is worse, forfeit all title to them as Gods gifts, by thus assuming to make them their own. But this is a disquisition I must leave every man to make in his own heart; only let me say, that he that has there any doubt of Gods universal or particular providence, has also in it the root of all *unchristian Sins*, of Distrust, Solicitude, and Fraud: there being nothing that can effectually supersede our own carkings and contrivances for our selves, but the assurance that God cares for us. Men being still apt to scramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and sufficient distribution, and therefore this error where ever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeders of Christian duty.

BUT besides those who thus doubt of Providence, there are others liable to great mistakes, I mean those who to their *just belief* of Gods Providence, superadd a *groundless confidence* of their own skill in fathoming it, that are not content to know it in its *product* and event, but pretend to discern it in its most secret *designments* and purposes; and do not so much *revers* Gods dispensations, as *interpret* them: I do not here mean to condemn all *particular applications* of providential Events, which are sometimes so extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own *expositors*, and point out the *construction* we are to make: and an humble advertence unto

such,

ſuch, is not only innocent but neceſſary: but when men ſhall attempt to read every line in *Gods hand*, to make their own inference from every efflux of Providence; theſe pretenders to *divine Palmiſtry*, ſeem to differ only thus much from thoſe who make a trade of the *natural*, that they Cheat *themſelves* as well as *others*.

YET there want not ſome who have gone yet farther, and think not only to *underſtand* Providence, but *aſſiſt* it: not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed *intendments*, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its *conceptions*: Of this ſort eſpecially are thoſe, who having poſſeſt their brains with ſome conjectural expoſitions of obſcure prophecies, will adminiſter to providence, and call out thoſe events they expect: and as if they were conſcious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themſelves. This Age has afforded too many inſtances of this, when the *fulfilling of Prophecies* has by ſome been made the ſolemn ſummons to *rebellion and bloud*: and in order to the *hating and deſtroying the whore*, Rev. 17. 1. Men have been animated to hate and deſtroy all who were not infected with their own Phrenſie. This we know has been call'd the *helping of the Lord againſt the mighty*, and ſomething more than votive Curſes awarded to thoſe who refus'd to aſſiſt. Thus have they firſt wildly miſtaken, and then no leſs wildly out-run Gods deſigns: as if like *Baal*, *Jud. 6.* he were unable to plead for himſelf, to vin-

vindicate his own cause, or effect his purposes without their help: and having resolved what he shall do, obtrude themselves upon him as his instruments; how repugnant such *anticipations* of Providence are to the *interests* of Christianity is too apparent from the many *detestable effects* they have produc'd.

BUT setting aside these, let us return to those we spake of before; who presuming to expound providential Events, make them the *Criterion* by which to judge both of *persons* and of *causes,* concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or disallowed by God, according to their *prosperous* or *adverse* Success. The first of these was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of process in the *Jews,* in the case of the *Galileans,* and before him *Solomon* had given it as a Maxim, that *no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him*: Eccl. 9. 2. And if under the *Jewish Oeconomy,* where temporal Blessings made up so great a part of their Promises, it was so; much more is it under the *Gospel,* whose frame and composure is quite distant; which instead of proposing secular prosperities to its *proselytes,* assures them the contrary; sets up the Cross as the Standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal Hopes but with an allaying *proviso* of Persecutions and Afflictions; nay, the Apostle to the *Hebrews* goes farther, makes them not only *incident* but *necessary* to Christians, the badge and cognizance of Sonship, whilest the *no chastening* is the fatallest Sign, *a token of bastardy* and

and abdication, *Heb.* 12. 7, 8. And doubtleſs the experience of every Chriſtian aſſerts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forſake our fathers houſe, and as long as we can have the riot and not the wants, ſhall never think of returning; we muſt be famiſht into conſideration, and our *husks* alone will ſend us home to the *fatted Calf*. And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our Iniquity our Puniſhment, that it may not be our Ruine; to embitter thoſe ſenſualities whoſe luſciouſneſs ſerves to intoxicate us, and to clip thoſe wings which he ſees carry us from him. Stories tell us that the *Trojan* Wives after the *deſtruction* of their Countrey, being wearied with their reſtleſs vagrant life, neceſſitated their Husbands to a *ſettlement* by *burning* their Ships. And the ſame kind ſtratagem God has upon us: he ſees that our worldly acceſſions do rather enlarge than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther purſuits, and by drawing us ſtill more from him the Center of reſt, expoſes us to endleſs wandrings, and then what can be kinder than to reſcue us from ſuch a condition, that Curſe of *Cain*, to be *a fugitive, and a vagabond in the earth*, to deprive us of our treacherous proſperities, and fire thoſe Ships wherein we are preparing like *Jonah*, to *fly from the preſence of the Lord*: ſo by a happy neceſſity forcing us to fix our ſelves on him. And this is the worſt God deſigns us in every adverſity: and did we mean but as well to our ſelves, we ſhould not miſs of receiving the happieſt Effects, even that

that *peaceable fruit of righteousness* the Apostle speaks of, *Heb.* 12. This holy men so well understood, that we find them dread nothing so much as an uninterrupted prosperity; they like the *Muscovite* Women, grew jealous of Gods love when he forbare to strike, upon which score it is, that in the Ancient Fathers, there are so many solemn petitions for stripes; such importunate solicitations for those *medicinal corrections*, wherein they judg'd both Gods *kindness* and their own *safety* to consist.

AND then how perverse, how prepostrous are our measures, when we conclude quite the other way, estimate *Gods love* only from *outward successes*, and think he is never angry but when he smites: a Perswasion, which as it is very false in its *grounds*, so very pernicious in its *effects*, and creates hopes and fears, as fallacious as its self. For first, if we apply it to our selves, it produces mischiefs proportionable to the divers states under which we are. If a man be *full* and *prosperous*, it makes him *proud* and *secure*, for when he has not only the possession of those things the World values, but takes them as an attestation of Gods peculiar kindness and approbation, what should make him either consider or reform his guilts? If he have sanctity enough to possess him of Gods favour, and all these profitable effects of it, he will not easily be perswaded he needs more: and any man that shall tell him he does, shall be heard with the same indignation wherewith *Cræsus* entertain'd *Solon*, when he found him *question* that

happineſs, which he expected he ſhould have *admir'd*. Proſperity is in its ſelf an emboldening thing, but when backt by this Opinion of it, grows into all inſolence, till at laſt it even recoil in the face of the Donor, and *dare* God by all thoſe enormous riots, to which it *enables* Men.

ON the other ſide, this Opinion preſents a leſs *merry*, but not leſs *dangerous* Temptation to thoſe in adverſity; for when they ſhall look on *themſelves* only as the *Anvil* for Gods ſtrokes, they will be too apt to complete the *parallel* by anſwering it in *hardneſs* and inflexibility; have the ἀντίτυπον νεῦρον, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Perſevering wickedneſs is ſo naturally the iſſue of Deſperation, that we find the *Jews* take up the one meerly to countenance the other, pretend *hopeleſneſs* to avoid *reformation*: Thus we find it, *Ezek.* 33. 10. *Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we live?* And again more plainly, *Jer.* 18. 12. *There is no hope*, and then the Inference is ready, *let us walk every one in his own ways.* Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to attone one whom we conclude implacable, ſo that Wrath may *conſume*, but will never *melt* us, 'tis Love only that has that *ſoftning*, diſſolving Power, and unleſs we diſcern a mixture of that in Gods *inflictions*, they will never render us *malleable* to his *impreſſions*. We kiſs a Fathers hand and rod, when an Executioners ſtroke we ſuffer rather than bear. St. *John* tells us *we love God becauſe he loved us*, 1 *John* 4. 19.

19. I wish all men would make good the Inference; but 'tis sure they are too apt to do it in the reverse, and will hate if they apprehend themselves hated; a state which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worst part of *Hell* to us, yet very incident to those who interpret every stroke of Gods, as the effect of enmity and utter aversion. This is to do that to our selves which the *Devils* so deprecated from Christ, to *torment us before our Time*, it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other World to be meerly punitive, that here being rather *discipline* than *vengeance* design'd to reduce, not destroy us: and indeed besides the *pain of sense* which this Error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that *of loss* also; deprives us of one of the great Evangelical *felicities*, that of *rejoycing in Tribulations*, which our Saviour thought so considerable, as to insert amongst his Beatitudes; and his Apostles frequently mention triumphantly as the great *priviledge* and *prerogative* of a Christian. For if all adverse successes be a note of Gods disfavour, there will be no place for joy even in the most pious sufferings. St. *Stephens* ravishing prospect will be intercepted, and a *Martyrs* death be as uncomfortable as a *Malefactors*. But if these were the only sufferings to which joy were annext, there would be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; those wherein we are more universally interessed, are those Chastisements of God which our Guilts provoke; which though in respect of their *cause* they are Matters of the great-

eſt ſadneſs, yet in regard of their ſignificancy and *effect*, they are Grounds of comfort, they ſignifie that God (however diſpleas'd) yet has not abandoned the care of us; thinks us worth his *correction*, and deſigns our *reducement*: and the Effect will (if not obſtructed by us) be anſwerable to that deſign: our *Chaſtening* here reſcues us from the *ſins*, and conſequently the *condemnation of the world*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. and this is ſure no ſlight motive of rejoycing; and we are very unjuſt to God and our ſelves, if we will exchange it for the ſullen murmurs of a deſperate incorrigibleneſs.

AND as this perſwaſion is thus *pernicious* in reflection on *our ſelves*, ſo neither is it more *innocent* when applied to *others*; for firſt, if we look on the men that proſper in the world, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *Pſal.* 73. 12. we ſhall too often find them anſwer the *character* he gives them in the former part of the *Pſalm*, and when from their temporal affluence, we ſhall conclude Gods favour to them, 'twill be hard reſiſting the *temptation*, which (without that Argument) the *Pſalmiſt* was under, of thinking it *vain to cleanſe our hearts, or waſh our hands in innocency*. Nay, we ſhall be apt to joyn our ſuffrage to thoſe in *Malachy* 3. 15. and call the *proud, happy*: and if we eſteem them ſo, 'tis natural to deſire to be like them; ſo we ſhall quickly grow to deſpiſe a poor or *afflicted Innocence*, and embrace all thriving *proſperous ſins*.

ON the other ſide, if we look on others in an adverſe calamitous ſtate, this Opinion ſuggeſts hard and ſevere ſentences concerning them, inclines

clines us to judge where we ſhould ſuccour, and how great an accumulation of Miſery that is, we may learn from *Job*, whom we find not ſo often nor ſo paſſionately complaining of any of his *preſſures*, as of the unkind *cenſures* of his Friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance of temporal ſucceſſes, made very falſe judgements of him, and as if they were to Glean after Satan, endeavoured to deſpoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the Conſcience of his Innocency. This is as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *to perſecute him whom God has ſmitten*, and *to talk to the grief of thoſe whom he hath wounded*; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderneſs, thoſe affections and bowels Chriſtianity requires; and therefore in this reſpect alſo, we may reckon this perſwaſion very injurious to Chriſtian duty.

NOR is it leſs ſo when applied to *Cauſes*, in which it is full as deceitful a Rule as it is in *Perſons*: God has deſign'd us another meaſure of our undertakings; his *word* and *law*, by the general proportions whereof, we are to ſquare and accommodate our particular *actions*: he ſends us not to his *providence*, and the various diſtributions of that, or allows us to judge of the *Juſtice*, by the *Succeſs* of our *Attempts*. If that were the trial, 'twere impoſſible for any enterprize to be lawful, ſince that which ſhould legitimate it, is ſubſequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: and as it does not make, ſo neither does it infallibly ſignifie it to be

either: and of thoſe who preſume it does, I ſhould ask whence it came to do ſo? If by any aſſignation of God let them produce it; and if not thence, I'me ſure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his *Providence* to make good our *phanſies* and *conjectures*. Nay, if we look into Scripture examples, we ſhall find this irrefragably confuted; the ſame Cauſe having at ſeveral times differing ſucceſs. Thus the *Iſraelites* were diſcomfited at their firſt aſſault upon *Ai*, and yet ſucceſful after; 'twas ſomething extrinſick to the cauſe that made the variation, that ſtill continuing the ſame. The like we find in the caſe of the *Benjamites*, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, *Judg.* 20. But there is one inſtance that may ſerve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the *Philiſtines*, he that ſhall contemplate that, will ſure never think fit to meaſure cauſes by ſucceſs, unleſs he will give the difference alſo to *Dagon*, who then triumpht in the ſpoils of the God of *Iſrael*. In ſhort, 'tis evident victories are not ſo entail'd upon the juſteſt cauſes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by ſome other ſecret diſpoſal of the Divine wiſdom; but the former is ſo frequently the obvious cauſe of it, that we are not often put to reſort to the later. 'Tis no ſtrange thing to ſee all *Iſrael* troubled by an *Achan*, or have the *Ark* taken captive from off the ſhoulders of a *Hophni* and *Phineas*, nor will it ever be poſſible

possible for the best cause to secure its self from the blasting influence of its Abettors crimes.

THIS is so clear and evident a Truth, that 'tis matter of some wonder, how the contrary perswasion should ever insinuate its self; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if Interest, that grand *Sophister*, had not introduced it. Men engage in designs not on intuition of their *lawfulness*, but *profit*, and when they are such as nothing can warrant *à priore*, their only reserve is to make them good *à posteriore*; to bring a licence after the fact, and justifie their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous soever it may seem to sober reason, yet such is the natural shame, or secular inconvenience of owning an *unjust Act*, that men will wrap themselves, though in the thinnest and most *diaphanous veils*, make use of the absurdest *pretences*, and fainteſt *colours* to shadow their *Guilt*, and whilest consciousness bids them say somewhat for themselves, and the case affords no solid plea, they are driven to these deplorable sleights and subterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that stands single, and is seldom us'd but in those causes that admit of no better; which we may reasonably conclude to be the reason, why it was so much insisted on by our late disturbers, who in such *abundance of light*, as they own'd, could not be suppos'd *ignorant* enough to believe themselves: 'twas certainly the destitution of better arguments that cast them upon this, forc't them to ransack the *Alcoran*, and rifle a piece of *Turkish Divinity* to make good their *Saintship*.

They now diſcern the unskilfulneſs of that *plea*, which a little time has converted to an *accuſation*. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering *Syllogiſmes*, and making them need a new ſucceſs to juſtifie their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here relieve them again, and by our perſonal ſins, help them to that which the juſtice of their Cauſe never did, nor is like to acquire them.

BUT though this *plea* of ſucceſs be frequently urg'd in *policy*, yet it prevails with many who know not that it is ſo; indeed the *vulgar* are ſo much ſubjected to their *ſenſes*, that generally the concluſions drawn thence are eaſily embrac'd, when thoſe from Reaſon and Conſcience have a double difficulty, firſt to be underſtood, and next to be admitted, and the moſt *elaborate diſcourſe* ſhall not convince them of the right of that *cauſe*, which in the laſt appeal to Gods Tribunal by War, has been openly condemn'd; whileſt the *ſpoils* of victory as much ſatisfie the Underſtanding of the *juſtice* of the Prize, as the Deſire with the *wealth* or *glory* of it. And this is it which renders ſuch kind of arguings very pernicious, they being ſo fitted to the common temper, that they ſeldom miſs to be effectual; and engage the *heady multitude* in the Proſecution of the worſt *deſigns*, that are recommended to them by the one *Catholick vertue* of Succeſs. This is indeed as the *Prophet* ſpeaks, *Ez.* 13.22. *to ſtrengthen the Hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedneſs*; to dazzle their Eyes ſo with the ſplendor of

proſperous

prosperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and discern it in its true form: And doubtless this was none of the less-prevailing arts of seducement among us, and drew in many to abet those seditious practices, which all Laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby *Christian Religion* has at once been violated and defam'd; has not only *her precepts* broken, but *her self* aspersit with the foul consequences of that disobedience, and so buys one injury with another; the contempt of her *Authority* with the loss of her *Reputation.*

WE have now seen the *ill consequences* issuing from these mistakes of Gods *Providence,* but we must take notice that there remains yet as great or greater danger on the other side; and that a *total neglect* is worse than an *erroneous construction* of it. For though God have secluded us from that more exact minute discerning of his purposes, yet he means not his *dispensations* should be lookt on as wholly *insignificant,* and therefore has given us the general scope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and restrain our *wandring guesses,* and also judge of *particular events.* Now as Gods original and primary *design* in the creation of Man, was to render him a *subject capable of eternal happiness*; so also have all his *subsequent Acts* toward him aim'd at the same end: and because there is nothing removes man so far from that grand purpose of his being as Sin; therefore God has made the suppressing of that, the universal intendment of his disposals concerning

ing us: ſo that the moſt different diſpenſations do ſeverally purſue that one end; *proſperity* and *adverſity* in their ſucceſſive changes are ſent to reclaim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only difference, that the *one* leads, the *other* drives. This is aſſerted by St. *Paul*, who tells us, that *the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God is to lead us to Repentance*, Rom. 2. 5. And alſo that when we are judg'd, *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the World*, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32. And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the ſame ſtrain; and both from proſperous and adverſe ſucceſſes urges the obligation to obedience. This is the notice God expects we ſhould take of all his dealings towards us. And the want thereof we find often ſharply upbraided by God to the *Jews*: how often does he recount his redeeming them from *Ægypt*, his enſtating them in *Canaan*, and all his wonderful works for them, with an accuſing reflection upon their ingratitude; and that we may know his *Judgements* are no leſs to be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him, *Amos* 4. making a *Catalogue* of them, and cloſing every period with this *Pathetick reproof* of their obſtinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me ſaith the Lord.* In ſhort, God requires that we ſhould obſerve every turn of his *hand*, in order to the reforming our own *lives*, and by the ſeveral *mediums* of Gratitude or fear, infer that *neceſſary Concluſion* of a ſincere *univerſal Obedience*; and the neglect of this is the crime the *Pſalmiſt* mentions, *Pſalm* 28. 5. with ſo ſevere a menace. *They regard not*

not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.

AND as this is requir'd from single persons, so also from societies and communities, which as they are in their publick capacities the most eminent subjects of Judgements or Mercies, so are they the most eminently accountable for both. And though the Neglect and Abuse of Gods methods be a very provoking *guilt* when 'tis only *personal*, yet is it much more so, when it becomes *national*: And therefore as it is every mans concern for his own *peculiar* to examine how he has answered Gods methods towards him, so is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the *Publick* also; especially where the dispensations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which respect the *Inquisition* cannot appear more necessary for any than *this Nation*; upon which consideration I hope the Reader will think it no unpardonable digression, if we awhile turn aside after it.

IT is the *affirmation of our Blessed Saviour*, that *where much is given, there shall be much requir'd*; a thing so consonant with natural Equity, that we all give our suffrage to it, by making it the measure of our expectations in secular things, wherein every man looks for *returns* proportionable to his *expence* or Industry. The Husbandman expects a *Crop* answerable to his *Seed* and *Labour*: and in the nobler *cultures* of the Mind, we justly exact of our Pupils to let their *manners* attest the *discipline* they have been under: According to which estimate we must resolve, that Gods expectations

ſtations from *us* of *this Nation* cannot but be very high, there being no people under the Sun, whom he has more ſignaliz'd as *his own* immediate care, on whom the *Divine Oeconomy* has more conſtantly and even ſolicitouſly attended in all the variety of ſeaſonable and powerful *applications*.

I SHALL not aſſume the work of a *Chronicle*, by giving a ſeries of all thoſe mercies, we receiv'd in the loins of our Anceſtors; and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauſeating and deſpiſing them; it having been the buſineſs of our days, to diſentail thoſe two moſt ineſtimable Bleſſings, of a *pure Religion* and *outward Peace*, which our immediate Progenitors left us; and to derive to our poſterity the contrary miſchiefs of impiety and confuſion.

BUT not to ravel ſo far back, I ſhall confine my reflections to ſo late a date, that I ſhall not need to beſpeak the faith afforded to *Hiſtorians*; ſcarce any that can be my *Reader*, but is qualified to be my *witneſs* too; and muſt acknowledge that there has on Gods part been no Method wanting, that might purifie us to himſelf *a Peculiar people zealous of Good works*. To that end of refining and cleanſing us it was, that he kept us ſo long in the *furnace*, permitted us to thoſe many *Fiery trials* of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a Deſcription of *thoſe ſufferings*, which every mans Memory can ſo readily repreſent to him; or to paint that *Flame* whoſe ſcorchings we have felt; 'tis enough to ſay, that *God* appear'd

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in them, earneſtly induſtrious to have reduced us; like *a skilful Captain* beſieg'd us cloſely, ſtraitned us ſo in all our intereſts, that it was ſcarce poſſible for us to fly any where but to himſelf. Indeed he that would make up an exact Catalogue of our Calamities muſt calculate in how many inſtances humane nature may be paſſive; there being ſcarce any of our ſuffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our *Eſtates,* our *Perſons,* our *Friends,* and which is more than all our *Conſciences,* all groaning under the weight of that *Yoke,* which our own Sins prepar'd, and other mens ſins put on. Which way ſoever we lookt, we ſaw nothing but that which might conſume our *Eyes* and grieve our *Heart*: If on the Church, we ſaw that torn by *Schiſm,* ſpoil'd by *Sacriledge*; the abomination of deſolation ſtanding in the Holy place, and the *houſe of Prayer* made in the moſt literal ſenſe *a den of Thieves.* If on the State, we ſaw the *breath* of our Noſtrils, the *Anointed of the Lord* taken in their *Pits, Impriſon'd,* and *Arraign'd,* and barbarouſly *Murder'd,* by thoſe who ſlew him like the *Heir* in the Goſpel, that they might ſeize on his *Inheritance.* We ſaw this and all other Miſchiefs eſtabliſht *by a Law,* and made as irreverſible as powerful malice could render them. And now in ſuch a diſtreſs, who would not think that ſuch a neceſſity ſhould have become our vertue? And ſo perfect a deſtitution compell'd our reſort to the Divine aid. And as little oppreſt States us'd to make themſelves homagers to the *Romans,*

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to engage their protection; ſo we ſhould have made an entire ſurrendry of our ſelves to *God*, that we might have gain'd a title to his reſcues and deliverances.

THIS genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in *ſome*, I would fain think in *many*; but we are not now conſidering *particulars*, but the *community*; and therefore how ſincere ſoever ſuch perſonal reformations were, they muſt not come under the account of publick and general, unleſs for their Number and Eminency they had been ſufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverſneſs: Many there might be whoſe hearts (as 'tis ſaid of *Joſiahs*, 2 *Chron.* 34.27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate, ſtill juſtly denominate us *a ſtiff neck'd people*; an Epithet wherewith God often reproaches the *Jews*, and ſure we have no leſs evidenced our title to it; for alas, as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableneſs of our oppreſſors towards us, in our obſtinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing elſe, we had yet reſerv'd this ſullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a ſhift to hold out againſt all theſe batteries; there was little *appearance*, and leſs *reality* of Repentance; and if ſome of our *luſts* were at all leſs raging, 'twas only becauſe they were ſtarved into a little tameneſs, the *ſupplies* cut off which ſhould maintain our Riot: but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, and even in the worſt of times we miſt not to be as luxurious as we were able: and as though we reſolv'd

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that *vice* like the *Sea*, ſhould gain in one part what it loſt in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defalkt from thoſe *expenſive* Sins, ſhould be made up in the *cheaper*: we could curſe, and ſwear, & blaſpheme in ſpight of *Sequeſtration*, and this wretched Immunity we made abundant uſe of, till we even became *Proverbial* for it; and gave our enemies pretence, to faſten it on us as our diſtinctive Character. Yet to ſhew our ſelves generous ſinners, there was *one vice* we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchriſtian animoſities, and *picques* among our ſelves; a ſin that helpt to revenge all the reſt: and was as well upon a humane, as divine account a grand inſtrument of our *ruine*. To theſe we may add our impatient murmurs at our ſufferings, which did in ſome work ſo prepoſterouſly, as to reconcile them to the inflicters, made them unworthily deſert that cauſe, they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of *Solomon*, Chuſe the ways of thoſe oppreſſors whoſe proſperity they envied, *Prov.* 3. But of theſe *real Apoſtates* the number I hope was not great, I wiſh I could ſay ſo alſo of thoſe *ſeeming deſertors*, whoſe knees bowed to *Baal*, though their hearts did not: who belied their own *loyalty*, and in a ſhew of compliance proſtituted *conſcience* in ſeveral Engagements as inconſiſtent with each other, as they all were with duty; and ſuch as they pretended no excuſe for their *taking*, but their reſolutions of *breaking*. I was indeed a ſad ſpectacle to ſee what ſhouls every menacing

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Edict brought in; while men ran in as much haſte to take the opportunity of *Perjury*, as the primitive Chriſtians were wont to do of *Martyrdom*: Indeed herein we ſeem'd to invade our enemies peculiar, would not ſuffer them to enjoy thoſe marks of diſtinction, they had framed to themſelves; ſo that as far as *Oaths* could ſignifie we were all *one Party*. And yet while we thus diſclaim'd Gods reliefs by theſe indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the ſucceſs of them: That he proſper'd not thoſe methods he had interdicted, and made us Triumphant, not only over our Enemies but himſelf too: and upon this ſcore many mutinous *blaſphemies* were utter'd and perhaps ſome more thought, though I confeſs, generally we were not ſo modeſt, as to ſtick at ſaying the worſt we could think, and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts men own'd of Gods juſtice, providence, nay his very being, would not think they ſuppreſt any thing as too ill to be ſpoken: we laid boundleſs expectations upon the juſtice of our *cauſe*, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being *Traytors*, or *Schiſmaticks*, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not *Victors*. *Samuel* tells *Saul* that *Rebellion was like Witchcraft*, but we ſeem'd to think *Loyalty* was ſo; that like a ſpell it was to keep us invulnerable, not only againſt our enemies but our Selves: and ſo countercharm all our crimes, that they ſhould only be active to pleaſe, not hurt us. But if in the laſt place we reflect on our ſelves

selves even in relation to that *cause* in which we so much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all men will not be able to evince they suffer'd for *God* and the *King*, though they did it in their *quarrel*: 'tis the Intent must denominate whose *Martyrs* they were, it being too frequent for private passions and interests, to march under the banner of conscience; and we call that sometimes taking up the *Cross*, which is only the taking up an *animosity* or *humor*. Indeed 'tis not possible for any to be Gods *Martyr*, who is not first his *Servant*: none of us will suffer the greatest things for a person for whom we will not do the least; and 'tis absurd Hypocrisie for a man to pretend he has left *all* for God, who we see cannot be woed to leave the most despicable *lust* for him. He that will not part with the noise of a loud *Oath*, the pleasure of an intemperate *Cup*, the applause of a profane *Jest* for God, will surely much less expose his *liberty*, his *estate*, his *life* for him: and therefore what hazards soever any man ran in any of those, he can with no justice set it upon Gods account, unless he can produce such other acts of obedience, as may witness this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear *God's party* will appear to have been but small among us, and perhaps *the King's* not much greater, it being not very probable that those should have any great sense of duty to *him*, that had none to *God*: or that those should religiously revere *one* Commandment, who despised the other *nine*. But we need not the help of inference and probability in

this matter, the mutinous and inſolent behaviour of many who profeſt loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is ſaid of *Joab*, that he turn'd after *Adonijah*, though he turn'd not after *Abſalom*, 1 King. 2 28. and ſome of ours had little private rebellions of their own even while they oppos'd the more publick. I love not to paſs cenſures on mens thoughts, yet I doubt ſome would be too conſcious to confute me, if I ſhould ſay there wanted not thoſe, who owed their *zeal* to their *Spleen*, and did not ſo much love thoſe they fought *for*, as hated thoſe they fought *againſt*. And it may perhaps deſerve enquiry, whether that demure *pretence of holineſs* their Adverſaries had put on, did not more avert ſome of our *Libertines* from them, than all their *real crimes*: They perhaps ſo far miſtook them, as to ſuſpect they might be in earneſt, when they profeſt to advance the *power of Godlineſs*, and at that took an *Alarm*, and ſuch Men (if ſuch there were) contended not for the Liberty of their *Countrey*, but their *Luſts*; and could with no juſtice, expect either a reputation, or ſucceſs from that cauſe which they at once helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and ſuſpect that even ſome of the devouter ſort were inſpir'd more by the Spirit of *oppoſition* than *Piety*; yet I confeſs 'tis hard to reſiſt that ſurmiſe, when 'tis conſider'd that our *Liturgy* never had its due veneration, but when the *Directory* was ſet up againſt it. Indeed he that ſhall remember how our *private Oratories* were then throng'd and crouded;

crouded; and shall now compare it with our *empty Churches*, will be tempted to think our *devotion* was of that sort, which is excited by *interdict*, and deadned by *invitations*; a perverse kind of Zeal kindled only by *Antiperistasis* or collision; none of that pure flame which descends from heaven. And then as our *Saviour* in another case saies, *if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness*, Mat. 6. If this fairer and more specious part of us were thus reprovable, how obnoxious were the other? and if our Earnestness in a righteous cause, by its Sinister motives or adherencies be unable to justifie its self, how shall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other Guilts.

THIS is the true though not full account of our behaviour under *Gods Discipline*, thus did we fructifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed, nothing but *degenerous fruit*. The *holy Writ* leaves it as a brand of most inveterate Impiety upon *Ahaz*, that *in the time of his distress he sinn'd yet more against the Lord*, 2 Chron. 28. 22. and sure we have too just title to the same Character of infamy; those sufferings which were sent to chastise our sins, serv'd but to encrease them, and like the *Israelites* in the *Brick-kilns*, they multiplied the more for their oppression; we debaucht even our *Executioners*, and made every new *calamity* supply us with some new *vice*. And now when Gods *rod* was thus despis'd, we were in all reason to expect he should draw his *sword*, revenge our re-

ſiſtance of his methods, by ſomewhat we could not reſiſt, make our *Plagues* as obſtinate as our *ſelves*, and involve us in hopeleſs inevitable ruine. *This certain fearful looking for of Judgment*, Heb. 10. 27. was all we had left our ſelves, of all the rich patrimony we were once poſſeſt of; and our preſent miſery ſeem'd impoſſible to expire any way but by dying into greater.

BUT as great artificers are us'd to magnifie their Art, by chooſing the moſt unlikely materials; ſo did it pleaſe God in this total indiſpoſedneſs of ours, when we were ſo unapt ſubjects to illuſtrate his mercy, and as if he deſign'd this *national deliverance* ſhould (in its proportion) be the Tranſcript of our more *univerſal redemption*, he viſited us not only in this ſtate of miſery, but enmity; when we had ſet our ſelves in defiance of his *judgments*, he laid as it were an Ambuſh of *mercy* for us, and ſurpriz'd us with ſafety: by ſuch undiſcernible ways *return'd the captivity of our Sion*, that *we were* indeed delivered *like them that dream*, Pſal. 126. 1. gave us a *victory* without a *war*: without the intervention of *garments rolled in bloud*, Eſa. 9. 5. inveſted us in our Triumphant robes, and in a word, made us inſenſibly to glide into our long forgotten proſperity.

AND now who can imagine, but this miraculous Mutation *without* us, muſt alſo work a Change *within* us. Indeed they muſt have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it poſſible it ſhould have perverſeneſs enough to reſiſt ſuch endearments; ſuch kindly Heat muſt needs

needs be ſuppos'd to melt us; and if before our Pride diſdain'd to be *compell'd,* yet even that ſtubborneſt part of us can not object againſt the being *courted into amendment.* So that when God has thus yielded to our terms, left us not ſo much as a *Punctilio* in our way to Piety, 'tis but a reaſonable expectation we ſhould *embrace* it with as great an Earneſtneſs, as it was formerly *rejected* by us.

AND would God we could ſay we did ſo; but alas, we ſtill affect prodigies, take a kind of wanton Joy in defeating Gods deſigns, and as if we aſpired to vye Miracles with him, have made our *returns* as unparallel'd as his *mercies*; ſo that the ſum of our account is this. No Nation was ever more ſignaliz'd by *Gods goodneſs,* or its *own perverſeneſs,* it being hard to determine in which of thoſe reſpects it is moſt *eminent.* That this is in the general perfectly true, there are too many particulars ready to teſtifie, indeed a whole cloud of Witneſſes do concurr to the proving the charge, I ſhall not undertake to examine *all,* yet *ſome* of the principal it will not be amiſs to take notice of.

BEFORE we enquire into the *uſe* we have made of Gods Mercies, let us a little conſider what our *ſenſe* of them is; and ſure of all the *interrogatories* we can put to our ſelves, this appears the *eaſieſt,* the moſt gentle favourable Teſt, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being ſo natural to men in miſery to value a reſcue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the

contrary would be the only wonder: we ſee even the *Jews*, who were none of the moſt malleable people, yet *deliverances* made impreſſions on them, ſet them to their *devout proceſſions* and *ſolemn hymns* in praiſe of God: nay ſuch a piece of native Religion is this, that the *Heathens* exemplifie it to us. The *Philiſtins* when they had taken *Samſon*, magnified their *Dagon*, as having *delivered their enemy and the deſtroyer of their countrey into their hands*, Judg. 16. 24. So upon the victory over *Saul*, 1 Sam. 31. 9. *they ſent round about to publiſh it in the houſe of their Idols.* And in all ſtories we find, the *Heathen Altars* were never ſo loaden with *Sacrifices*, as upon ſuch occaſions: and the Goſpel tells us that thoſe on whom Chriſt beſtowed miraculous cures, were ſo tranſported with them, that their gratitude ſupplanted their obedience, and made them notwithſtanding his prohibition proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our ſelves, we ſhall not be able to match any of theſe inſtances. 'Tis true our late *change* was entertain'd with a Joy *profuſe* enough, but not enough *religious.* We ſaw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoyced, but we did not ſo much conſider that the *Lord* had done them, *Pſ.* 114. and ſo were rather affected with the *rarity* and *profitableneſs*, than the *mercy* and *kindneſs* of the Diſpenſation: and though the care of our *Governours* have provided for the religious part alſo, aſſign'd *days of Purim* for the perpetual commemoration of our *deliverance*,

yet

yet our slight observance of them does too fully evince our Joy was meerly secular; and surely he that observ'd the numerous and loud *acclamations* in the *streets*, and the few faint *Hallelujahs* in the *Temple*, must needs say they were very disproportionate, and that how much soever the most of us rejoyc't, it was not in the *Lord*: and then we are not to wonder that it was so transient; since it was meerly *earthly* it must needs partake of the fadingness of its *original*: whereas had we deriv'd it higher,, it would have been *lasting* and *durable*; it could not so suddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, *in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.* But alas, our transports were such as exhausted themselves in their own noise, we expresst our Joy in *Bonfires*, and it vapour'd away in the *smoke*; there wanted that mixture of Piety which should have fix'd that *volatile passion*, and we who at first were much more glad than thankful, within a very short time ceased to be either.

AND then as *violent Heats* when once expir'd, are succeeded by the *extremest Cold*, so has it fared with us; we fell from our *Extasies* not to the mean, but the contrary extreme; our vast complacencies at their parting, carried with them, even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyless, but impatient. It was indeed matter of Equal shame and wonder, to see a scene so suddenly chang'd, wherein as in many other instances, we seem'd to have transcrib'd the co-

py of the mutinous *Iſraelites*, who we find in the very ſame Chapter, *Ex.* 15. triumphing and repining; and no ſooner were the Timbrels out of their *hands*, but Complaints were in their *mouths*, *verſ.* 24. *What ſhall we drink?* and in the beginning of the next, with the ſame querulous importunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the compariſon, their Murmurs had ſome extenuating circumſtances which ours have not; they lookt indeed with ſome appetite upon *Ægypt*, and made ſome propoſals of Return, but it was while they ſuffered the hardſhips of the *wilderneſs*; they preferr'd a repleted *ſlavery*, before a hungry *freedom*; but even they were not ſo frantick in their mutinies, as to make any ſuch offer in *Canaan*, or have any Emulation to the *Garlick* and *Onions*, amidſt the affluence of *Milk* and *Honey*: No 'tis we Alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the ſins of *Canaan*, and the *Wilderneſs*; murmur as much under our *Vines* and *Fig-trees*, as at *Rephidim*, or *Marah*, and make all the outcries of *want* and *ſlavery*, whileſt we wallow in the utmoſt luxury of *plenty* and *freedom*. I need not hear ſpecifie the particulars of our Murmurings, this diſcourſe being not likely to find many whoſe innocence will need that information, this *malignant humor* having ſpread ſo, that 'tis now become almoſt a ſcandalous (becauſe a ſingular) thing to be contented. And certainly a conſidering Foreiner, that ſhould come among us, could not but be aſtoniſht to ſee a Nation ſo full of all thoſe things which uſe to create tem-

temporal satisfactions, and yet to find no body in it satisfied; to see so many parties among us, and none prosperous. This is such a riddle as would tempt a man to suspect his *senses*, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a *restoration*: been under the delusion the *Prophet* describes of the *hungry and thirsty man, that at his waking, finds he is empty and his soul hath appetite*, Esay 29. 8. 'Tis a sad, but visible truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been so far from filling our desires, that it has only serv'd to enlarge them: for I appeal to any of our loudest mutineers, whether if some years since the present state of affairs had been represented to them, dresst in the worst circumstances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth *Rachels* prize of seven years more hardship; nay whether they would not willingly have made some abatements, relinquisht part of what they now enjoy, to have had the rest secur'd? And when God has granted us all we *then* askt, shall we murmer because we could *now* perhaps ask something more; and like ingrate Debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment? Was it not enough that he engag'd his *Omnipotence* for us, but must his *Omniscience* also be prest upon the same service? and provide all he could foresee we would wish? Alas, do we think we have the same hank upon God that some Gallants have on their trusting Merchants, that upon Peril of losing all former scores, he must still go on to supply us? shall we think nothing

thing fit for oblivion but our obligations, and in this perverſe ſenſe tranſcribe S. *Paul*, Phil. 3. 13. *forgetting thoſe things which are behind, reach forward to the things that are before*: this indeed too fully ſpeaks us the off-ſpring of our firſt Parents, we can find no guſt in all the fruits of Paradiſe, if any one be denied us; and ſtill look not on what we *have*, but what we *want*; and as it is obſerv'd of the greedier ſort of creatures that they reliſh not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we *devour*, but do not *enjoy* our Bleſſings; and to require him to ſatisfie us, is to aſſign him the *Poets* Hell, ſet him with *Belus* daughters to the task of filling a *ſieve* with water, or rolling *Syſiphus*'s ſtone; our growing appetites ſtill keeping us empty and reſtleſs amidſt all endeavours to make us otherwiſe; ſo that whereas God uſes to commit his *favours* to Men, as *ſeed* to the Earth, in expectation of an *harveſt*, ſome fruits of gratitude and obedience; they ſeem with us rather to be flung into a *Gulph*, whoſe property is only to *ſwallow* never to *fructifie*.

I KNOW mens *Minds* are ſo poſſeſt with their diſcontents, our daily mutinous blaſts have puft up and ſwelled our grievances to ſuch a vaſtneſs, that he muſt expect to be very impatiently heard, that ſhall attempt to repreſent them in a leſſer ſize; yet ſure 'twere not impoſſible even upon a direct view, to demonſtrate them very *light* and *moderate*: but upon a comparative, perfectly *trivial* and *inconſiderable*; and 'tis a little

little ſtrange, that we who bare our *late ſuffering eſtate* with ſo much Impatience, ſhould not have impreſſions enough left in our memory, to confront to all our *preſent regrets.* Do we not quietly now poſſeſs the fruits of our own, or our Progenitors *induſtry,* without danger of any Sequeſtration, but what our own Luxuries inflict? Are not our *Perſons* at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we riſe in the Morning, we need not fear our next lodging ſhall be in the *Goal* or dungeon; nor when we ſit down to our Meal, ſuſpect the intruſion of *arm'd uninvited Gueſts,* who, ere whiles we know, were wont to ſurpriſe us, as the Plague did the *Iſraelites, even while the meat was yet in our mouths*; are not our Lives under the cuſtody of known *Laws,* ſo that no man is in danger that will but keep himſelf within thoſe *Boundaries*; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by ſhews and Pageantries of Juſtice? And beſides theſe real *eſcapes* from *ſlavery,* are we not reſcued from the moſt imbittering circumſtance of it, the having *ſervants rule over us,* a thing which rendred our ſubjection as mean and ſervile, as it was ſharp and preſſing, and which we were *then* ſo ſenſible of, that it never miſt to *bring up the rear* of our Complaints. Laſtly, if we reflect upon our higher ſpiritual concerns, are we not freed from thoſe boiſtrous robuſt *temptations,* which with the violence of Famine and Sword, Beggary and Death aſſaulted our *conſtancy,* and left no mean between

Martyr-

Martyrdom and Apoſtaſie? Are we not alſo reſtor'd to all thoſe ſpiritual advantages which we once profeſt ſo much to value? That *well of life* now lies open before us, after which we once panted like the *Hart* after the *water-ſprings*; our ancient *worſhip* is revived, and wants only our attendance to make it ſolemn; whereas the *abomination of Deſolation* ſtood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to ſin; needed, but were denied the *Liturgy* to pray againſt them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer *ſtones* given us for *bread*, nor experiment that ſad riddle of being at once cloyed and ſtarved amidſt exceſs of preaching, ſuffering a Famine of the Word. And now are all theſe worth no regard, if they are not, why did we exclaim ſo loudly when we wanted them? if they are, why are we ſtill as querulous now we have them? 'Tis ſure, theſe include all our great and ſubſtantial intereſts as men, and Chriſtians, and thoſe being provided for, 'tis not eaſily imaginable what others we ſhould have important enough to make us querulous, unleſs it be thoſe of Paſſion and Humour. One mans *ambition* perhaps wants a ſatisfaction, another mans *avarice*, a thirds *ſpleen*; and this *diſcord* makes up the very unmuſical Harmony of our *murmurs*. If we ſee but a *Mordecai* in the Kings gate whom we wiſh removed, we can like *Haman* find no guſt in any thing we enjoy. If we ſee ſome, who we think have born leſs of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally or perhaps above our ſelves, we are ſure to make out the Parable,

rable, by murmuring at the good man of the houſe: Or if *Nineveh* be ſpar'd, if all be not executed to whom we have denounc'd deſtruction, we like *Jonah* ſit down in a ſullen diſcontent, and grow weary of our lives, becauſe others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To theſe and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our *grievances* may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any diſpaſſionate hand, 'tis ſure they can never become a counterpoize to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the *Prophets* phraſe, appear *lighter than vanity and nothing.*

BUT I ſuppoſe ſome will ſay, 'tis not only *preſent* uneaſineſſes of which they are impatient, but the poſſibility of *future*, a fear of relapſing into our former eſtate by the ill managery of our preſent: To theſe I ſhall anſwer, That admit it were ſo, yet ſure 'twill be no wiſdom to anticipate our miſeries, to foreſtall diſcontents, and make foreſight as painful as actual ſuffering. In other forbidden inſtances we chuſe to enjoy the preſent, and with an *Epicurean* Indifferency cry, *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we dye*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 32. How is it that we here become ſo unluckily ſagacious, unleſs it be that murmuring is a Senſuality we count equivalent, nay ſuperior to all rational ſatisfactions; and therefore that we may have no intermiſſion of that delight, ſuborn our phancies to find occaſions, and fetch in from the future thoſe ſupplies which the preſent affords not: But beſides this, I ſhould in the ſecond place ask theſe great *Diviners*, why they do not alſo

alſo foreſee, that this very *mutinous temper* of theirs is the moſt direct and infallible means of bringing thoſe *miſchiefs* they pretend to fear; that it is ſo, is moſt evident, and ſo well obſerv'd by our *Adverſaries*, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleaſure, but deſigns upon it; and to that purpoſe have their *Engins* on work to blow up the *hot Spirits* among us, in expectation from thence to raiſe a *flame*. So blind a thing is *Paſſion*, that it hurries on to the things which in their iſſue we moſt abhor; makes us our Enemies *drudges*, and the *forgers* of our own ſhackles; and whileſt we cry out of petty Indulgences, we our ſelves give them in the *lump*, what we grudge them in *parcels*: This is a miſerable infatuation, and while we act thus unreaſonably, we are ſure no competent declamers againſt ill managery. But beſides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are alſo to remember that there is a Divine vengeance attending it: when *bounties* and *largeſſes* are quarrell'd at, we neceſſitate God to another Method, nay indeed, not only his *vengeance*, but even his *kindneſs* ſeems to ſuggeſt it, when he ſees our conſtitutions ſuch, that his gentle applications work contrary effects: 'tis very appoſite for him to try whether the *Antiperiſtaſis* will operate on the other ſide; if we ſmart thus under *lenitives*, 'tis but fit to eſſay, if *corroſives* will eaſe us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us *happy*, is to make us *miſerable*.

BUT would God we might yet prevent the need of ſuch unkindly *expedients*, and by a ſober eſtimate,

eſtimate, and thankful ſenſe of what we have, provide to conſerve it: not faſtidiouſly deſpiſe great and eminent *bleſſings*, becauſe perhaps they come not home to every part of our *wiſhes*. Alas, thoſe plenary ſatisfactions agree not with the nature of Earthly things: 'tis an obſervation long ſince rais'd from the Globular and Triangular form of the World and our Hearts, that 'tis impoſſible the one ſhould be fill'd with the other, there will ſtill be ſome angles, ſome vacuities left; our very *acceſſions* create new *wants*, and like an unſound limb, the healing of *one* Sore is the breaking out of *another*. Every thing under the *Moon* partakes of her *viciſſitudes*, augments and decreaſes only with this Difference, that though their *wains* be to as low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly *at the full*. There never was, nor never will be a State here completely happy: And as the *Philoſopher* handſomly reproacht the impatience of the *Perſian* King for the death of his Wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of *three* men that had never griev'd to write upon her *Tomb*; ſo ſurely we may make the like offer to our *male-contents*, and engage to redeem all their uneaſineſſes, if they can point us out (I ſay not three, but) *one age* wherein there were no *complaints*. What then are our clamorous Repinings, but ſo many loud *invectives* againſt Gods *decree*; a Deſire to ſubvert his fundamental *Law*, and confound the *diſtinction* he has irreverſibly ſet between our *Earthly* and our *Heavenly* ſtate: and alas,

alas, What mad inſolence is this, to expect that the whole *Oeconomy* of the world muſt be chang'd only to humour us? that God muſt replant us a *Paradiſe*, pluck up every one of the Briers and Thorns which were our native curſe? nay, bring down *Heaven* to us, and enſtate us in undiſturb'd unmix'd felicities? This is indeed ſimply conſidered a very wild expectation, but yet more ſo when 'tis conſidered how we qualifie our ſelves for ſuch a priviledge: for let me ask, are we as eager to anticipate the *holineſs*, as the *happineſs* of Heaven? Do we as paſſionately deſire to do *Gods* will, as that God ſhould do *ours*? And æmulate the *Angelical obedience* and purity, as much as *bliſs*? Theſe are Interrogatories which need no verbal Anſwer, our lives do too fully reſolve them in the negative, and then how ſhameleſs a partiality is it, thus to carve to our ſelves, and chuſe out of either ſtate what we beſt like, reſerve all the *ſenſualities* of this world, and yet cry out for the *impaſſibleneſs* of the next; but alas, theſe are pretenſions as inconſiſtent as they are bold, our *vices* having ſuch a native inſeparable adherency of *pain* and *vexation*, that 'tis not the moſt dexterous managery of a ſin that can ever ſever them, but if we will retain the *one*, we muſt the *other* alſo: A Truth which might be exemplified to us throughout the whole *Catalogue* even of ſenſual ſins; but it is moſt eminently viſible in this of *murmuring*, which ſtays not as others do to take Pain at the *rebound*, and by way of reſult, but has it as its firſt *Element* and principle; it being its

ſelf

ſelf almoſt as great a pain, as any it can betray us to: and yet to ſecure an advance and *perpetuity* of Torment, every Event ſerves to foment and heighten it, and the moſt deſperate things are equally combuſtible to that *flame*. Indeed he that is poſſeſt with that humour, has a kind of fury within him, that will never let him reſt: And alas, what *Legions* of ſuch evil Spirits are now among us? How are we as it were inſpir'd with *Mutiny*, it being the *univerſal dialect* of the Nation; and of many in it, who cannot be ſuppos'd to found it in any obſervation of their own, but are led by the *common genius*, and bellow rather by conſent with the reſt of the herd, than for any uneaſineſs, at leaſt of *injuſtice* and *oppreſſion* (for ſuch only give pretence for *Mutiny*) that themſelves feel. And ſince 'tis become a *Plebeian vice*, would God our *Gentry* would uſe it as they do their *faſhions*, and leave it off (if for no better reaſon) for its being *vulgar*: And indeed 'twere but æquitable, that thoſe who have taken up ſo many ſins upon *punctilio*, ſhould for once lay down one upon the ſame ſcore. The *Athenian* State put down their *Oſtraciſme* (which otherwiſe they were fond enough of) becauſe it was debaſed, by happening to fall on *Hyperbolus*, a deſpicable and abject perſon: and there ſeems not much difference in the caſes, ſave only that we are more tenacious of *Sins*, than they of *Puniſhments*; and I fear we ſhall ſo long retain this, till we find it its own *Lictor*, not only in the *preſent uneaſineſs*, but in that more *fruitful harveſt* of Miſchiefs, where-

of it has now ſown the ſeeds. We ſee here what our thankfulneſs is, for thoſe eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy *ſpecimen*, what we are like to find, when we ſurvey the uſes we have made of them, which God knows have been ſo unnatural and perverſe, as does too fully parallel the former inſtance.

FOR firſt, if we reflect upon our *ſpiritual bleſſings*, what has the enjoyment of thoſe advantages produced, but the contempt of them; we have an eaſie free acceſs to God in his Sanctuary, our *Churches* are no longer *Garriſons* to keep out the worſhip, to which they were devoted, but like *hoſpitable doors*, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the *flaming ſword* is removed, we have loſt all appetite to the *Tree of life*, can willingly let thoſe *Everlaſting gates* (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſtyles them) *Pſal.* 21. *ſtand* as everlaſtingly *open* ere we enter them: And though the Fabricks are by Gods providence reſcued from their duſt and ruines, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worſe deſolation, ſtrive to depopulate thoſe ſacred Manſions, and execute againſt them that *prophetick threat* concerning *Nineveh*, *Nahum.* 1. *Leave them empty, void and waſte.* And indeed ſo they are, if not in an abſolute, yet in a Comparative ſenſe; for could we at any time of *Divine Service* make an eſtimate of *all* the perſons that are abſent, 'twould ſcarce be diſcern'd that *any* are there; were all corners ranſackt, what a multitude

multitude of *Recusants* should we find upon a far differing account from that of Conscience? Some we should see stretching themselves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their *sloth*, not their *God*; others perhaps we may find rous'd from their Couches, upon the summons not of *Religion* but *Vanity*; some new garment is to be fitted, some exotick dress essayed, and they who grudge *one hour* to the Preachers glass, can spend *many* at their own; where they are so taken up with their *Idolatries* to themselves, that they think of no other worship; nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worst diversion, that some did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim, defile those lesser Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themselves off from the Communion of *Christs body*, to make themselves *members of an Harlot*: or that others were not *Bacchus* his Votaries when they should be *Gods*, spend that time in their frantick revels, and sing a *Dithyrambick* instead of *Te Deum*. As for the *Mammonist*, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the *Israelites* to his *Gods of Gold*, *Exod.* 32. 31. He is looking with veneration on his Idoliz'd treasure, numbring those bags he dares not use, or perhaps with a more active Zeal pursuing the means of encreasing them. Thus alas, may we go from one to another, and as it was in *Ezekiels* vision, see still greater abominations, *Ezek.* 8. And certainly that All-seeing Eye, which discerns what multitudes do thus busie themselves, at the times even of his solemn-

eſt worſhip, cannot but adjudge us moſt profane deſpiſers of his mercy in reſtoring it: Yet would to God 'twere only the *abſent* upon whom that ſentence would fall; but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church does too loudly teſtifie how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean a rate they value all that is done there: Thoſe *Eyes* which there ſhould wait on God, as thoſe *of a Servant on the hands of his Maſter, Pſal.* 123. 2. are rolling about to fetch in all the vanities and temptations which can occurr to them, and look *every way*, but *towards Heaven.* Our *Tongues* which ſhould be toucht with a Coal from the Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are buſied in *private Colloquies* with thoſe about us: Buſineſs, News, nay, all the impertinent chat of our moſt vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; ſo that he who would know the *talk of the Town* or neighbourhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the *Church* will as certainly ſupply him: And this ill employment of our *Tongues*, engages the like of our *Ears*, which when they ſhould be hearkening what the Lord God will ſay concerning us, are liſtening to thoſe *vain diſcourſes* we hold with one another, from all which outward indecencies we may too ſurely collect the inward irreverence of our heart. And is it poſſible that this ſhould now be the Temper of *thoſe*, who not long ſince ſeem'd to bewail their *excluſion* from thoſe ſacred Aſſemblies: Did we long for *them* as *David* for the *waters of Bethlehem*, when they appear'd unattainable,

able, and when they are brought to us, refuse to taste them, poure them out not as he did in *devotion*, but in *contempt*? 'Tis true indeed, in *temporal* Delights *possession* usually proves a nauseating thing, and takes off our *appetite*; but it uses not to be so in *spiritual*, whose peculiar property it is not to satiate, but excite by fruition: But alas, though the Things we converse with are *spiritual*, our Hearts are *carnal*, and that is the cause why instead of crying out with the *Psalmist*, *When shall I come to appear in the presence of God*, *Psal.* 42. We, like those in *Malachy*, Chap. 1. 13. *Snuff at his service, and say, What a weariness is it?* A weariness indeed it appears in the literal sense with many, who sleep at it as men over-labour'd, and scarce take so sound repose in their own houses as in Gods; indeed such is the variety of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that should an *unbeliever* come into their Assemblies, he must surely (as St. *Paul* supposes in another case, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23.) say *we are mad*; to see some gazing, some whispering, some laughing, others sleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number praying; is such a *medly*, as the most brutish *Idolaters* never admitted in their *worships*; and the way of worshipping *Mercury*, by throwing stones, or *Hercules* by cursing, is a sober and decent kind of service compar'd with this. And now alas, when will the *Church* recover its ancient Title, and become the *house of prayer*; 'tis sure according to the present appearance it may have many more proper names, that being the least part of the bu-

ſineſs done in it: 'Tis true, there are ſome that make it a *Sanctuary*, but 'tis only againſt the penalties of the *Law*, or reproach of errant *Atheiſm*; they come to ſave their money or their credit; others perhaps ſhun the ſolitarineſs of being at home, and come not as to a place of *Devotion*, but *Concourſe*; and 'tis to be doubted, ſome viſit that place as they do many others, becauſe they have nothing elſe to do: They want their week-days diverſion, and ſo are driven thither upon meer deſtitution of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of *Sunday play-houſe*, ſit there as Spectators or Judges, to ſee the *company*, or cenſure the *Preacher*, but never remember that themſelves have any other part to act; or are beheld by *Him*, who will not always be patient of ſuch profanation; but will, as the *Scripture* ſpeaks, *Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his*. We know among men, every one counts his Houſe his fortreſs; and an Affront offered him *there*, doubles the Injury, and is not only a *contempt*, but an *invaſion*: and ſhall it not be a proportionable enhanſement with *God* alſo, thus to defie him *within his own doors*, and approach his preſence in an impious bravery, the more fully to ſhew him, how little we regard him. At this rate while we addreſs our ſelves, we may as ill manner'd Gueſts be *forbid his houſe*: Interrogated by God as the *Jews* were, *Iſ.* 1. *Why doeſt thou tread my Courts?* A total abandoning of Worſhip being more fair and ingenuous than ſuch Devotion: wherein like the *barbarous ſouldiers*,

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we bring Christ a *Scepter* only *to smite* him on the head with it; and make a preface of *homage* to give our selves the sport of the *mockery*: nay, 'tis sadly to be fear'd, that God may *thrust* us out of his House, *shut* his Doors against us, *rescue* his Service and himself from our profanation, and put us again under the same, (or a worse interdict than that) which lately lay upon us.

HAVING now seen our scandalous Irreverence towards Gods worship in *general*, 'tis too easie to make Application to the *several parts* of it; every one of which must necessarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but *secular* with us; those are equally disagreeing to all the *Divine* offices: 'twill be needless therefore to trace our wandrings in each of those, since our whole *behaviour* in the Church is one great *deviation* from the business we should come about: yet that supersedes not to every guilty person himself the necessity of a more distinct and particular reflection. 'Tis sure at the *last dreadful Audit*, we must account for every of those spiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas, what a *dismal reckoning* will many of us have then to give up, when our *prayers* which we now turn into Sin, shall be turn'd into *perdition*: and *We* who would not supplicate our *God*, shall in vain invoke the *mountains and hills to hide us from the face of the lamb*, when that Word which we now so fastidiously despise, that it must be drest up in the colours of humane Rhetorick, to make us at all pa-

tient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us when it is fartheſt removed from being Gods: when *that word*, as our *Saviour* ſpeaks, *ſhall judge us*, and that gracious *invitation to life* end in that fatal ſentence, *Go ye Curſed*. Nay, when our very Propitiation ſhall *plead* againſt us, and the crucified Body of our Saviour, which we have *in Effigie* ſo often recrucified, in our unworthy approaches, or impious neglect of the holy *Euchariſt*, ſhall *witneſs* againſt us as its *murderers*, when we ſhall be found not *ſprinkled* as with the blood of a *ſacrifice*, but *imbrued* as with that of *ſlaughter*: when all theſe means of our ſalvation, ſhall thus miſerably convert, and from the *ſavour of life*, become that *unto death*, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. then we ſhall to our amazement find, how differing our eſtimates of them were from Gods; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our *dooms-day*, and *judge our ſelves that we may not be judg'd of the Lord*: To make an impartial account of all theſe our profanations, and accuſe our ſelves before his *mercy ſeat*, that ſo we may prevent the arraignment at his *bar of Judgement*. And as Offenders are uſually enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilts in the very places where they committed them; ſo let us make the *Church* the Scene of our *penitence*, as we have of our *faults*: By our ſtrong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary Reverence, redreſs the ſcandal of our Profaneneſs. This, and only this is the way to ſecure us againſt the

the *final* Vengeance of these sins; nay, and against the *intermedial* also: for we are not to expect that so unkind abuse of mercy shall be wholly respited to another world, it being so exasperating a *crime,* as must in all probability awake Gods *fury,* and pull down present Judgments, I wish the Event do not too soon attest the reasonableness of this supposal.

IF from our *spiritual* Blessings, we now descend to our *temporal,* we shall not appear much better managers of those; they being generally employed to purposes the most distant from those, for which they were given. And first for our *peace,* that great comprehensive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our *civil* Capacities, the same that *health* is to our *natural*; the thing by which we relish and taste the rest of our comforts, we may from the Song of *Zachary,* Luk. 1. learn for what intent God bestows it: *Deliverance from enemies* is to no other end, but that we may *serve God in holiness and righteousness all the daies of our life*: But alas, he that observes how we employ our quiet, must surely say it serves little to the advancement either of Holiness or Righteousness: For the first of these we have already seen, how little of *holiness* we shew even in that place where nothing else should be admitted; and we are not so prepostrously religious, to shew more in others. That *Piety* which is so cold and benumn'd under the warm breath of the *publick Ordinances*; we may well presume stark frozen, in

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our more retir'd offices: and if it thus faint and ſink in conſort, 'tis ſure more liable to the Wiſe mans *Væ ſoli*, and utterly dies when we are alone. 'Tis true indeed, theſe *Cloſet tranſactions* are immediately viſible to none but the *ſearcher of hearts*, yet in true Devotion there is ſuch a *Symmetry* and proportion, that the Inferences we make by *analogy* may be very irrefragable; nay, 'tis to be fear'd many lye open to a yet clearer *conviction*, and may be proved to have few or none of thoſe private intercourſes with heaven; for though a negative be not ſimply evincible, yet as in civil caſes we prove a man not to have been at this time in ſuch a place, by his having actually been in another; ſo were the whole Week, Moneth, perhaps Year: of ſome men exactly traced, we ſhould find them ſo engroſſed with other *diverſions*, that there will ſcarce be found any Minute for *devotion* to interpoſe: Mens worldly or fleſhly Concerns ſo divide their *time*, that God from whom 'tis all deriv'd can be afforded no tribute out of it. Yet alas, 'twere well if this privative ſort of impiety were all we had to anſwer for: but 'tis too apparent we do not only *neglect* God, but *reproach* and violate him: what elſe are thoſe bold and inſolent *blaſphemies* wherewith we daily aſſault him, making him the mark at which all our wild Paſſions are ſhot. Do we want any thing either for our *uſe* or *delight*, preſently *God* is accuſed, his *providence* or his *goodneſs* queſtioned; and he declaim'd againſt either as impotent or illiberal. Does any body

body vex or disquiet us, God must have his share of our displeasure, his sacred name must be profaned, and we count our fiercest *Revilings* of men, faint and insignificant, if not inspired with the most *dreadful* and *horrid Oaths*; Nay, he stands obnoxious to all the displacencies we receive even from inanimate creatures, if a *Die* or a *Card* run amiss, our resentments are presently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the *Cheat* that rookt us of our *money*, because he does not secure us from those losses, to which we wantonly expose our selves; nor is it only our eager and warmer *passions* that thus invade him: Our pleasanter *moods* do the very same, and we blaspheme by way of divertisement; every impertinent story or insipid *Jest*, must have the haut-goust of an Oath to *recommend* it, as every incredible Narration has to *attest* it: to say nothing of those more solemn and deliberate *perjuries*, wherein we impiously suborn Gods venerable and dreadful *name*, to be the Engin of our fraud and malice: and as if we thought he would forswear as well as we, bring him to *countenance* those Crimes he has vowed to *punish*. Thus do we with a prodigious impiety contaminate even divinity its self, make it the sink for all our puddles to run into; and prostitute that *name* which as the *Psalmist* speaks, is *great, wonderful and holy*, to all the unholy *purposes*, our Passions, our Interest, or our Phancies can suggest to us.

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THIS *profaneneſs* is ſo proper a foundation for *Atheiſm*, that we are not to wonder to ſee ſo many advance from the one to the other, they pay ſo little of the reverence due to God, that at laſt they turn their *impiety* into *argument*, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat ſo unlike one. And truly this ſeems to be the grand piece of *Logick*, which has diſputed many, not only out of *Chriſtian*, but all *native* Religion. How unhappily ſucceſsful it has proved among us is too apparent in thoſe impious diſcourſes which are every where heard, wherein men are arriv'd to ſuch a licenciouſneſs, that *Davids Atheiſt* was a modeſt Puny, who only ſaid in his Heart *there is no God*, and perhaps upon that account ſhall by ſome be adjudged to deſerve the Epithet the *Pſalmiſt* gives him, and be indeed thought a *fool* that would not own what would now a-daies ſo certainly denominate him a *Wit*, or in the ſolemn ſtile a *Maſter of Reaſon*. And indeed they will atteſt the propriety of the ſtile, they rather *governing* Reaſon, than being *govern'd* by it; otherwiſe 'twould be hard to diſcern, how from different *premiſes* the ſame *concluſion* ſhould be induced: and thoſe who in the late adverſe times denied God in revenge of their ſufferings, ſhould now pay their gratitude alſo in the ſame manner, and renounce him as (or more) loudly ſince his ſignal atteſtation of that *righteous cauſe*; his not owning whereof was then their *principal plea*. The truth is, 'tis a little ſtrange how Atheiſm could admit ſuch enhanſing acceſſions as we find it has;

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for it being the completion and higheſt ſtep of Ill, and that to which all others do but ſubordinately tend, one would think it ſhould from its firſt appearance in the world, have been ſo mature and full grown a ſin, as could be capable of no improvement; but ſo ſubtilly wicked are theſe later daies, that we can never be brought to a *non ultra*, but ſtill find ſomething to add to the compleateſt ſin: therefore though of thoſe that are really Atheiſts, one cannot be ſaid to be more ſo than another, yet ſome may be more daringly, and miſchievouſly ſo; and ſure in that reſpect our *modern*, ſurmount all *former*: They were generally on the defenſive part, took up the *tenet* as a *buckler* againſt the unwelcome invaſions and Checks of conſcience, and deſign'd nothing but the more *peaceable enjoyment* of their *luſts*; but *now* men do not only uſe, but love it; make themſelves its avowed *Champions*, ſeek to win it *Proſelytes*; and in ſhort, appear ſo zealous for it, as if they made it their *religion* to have none. And God knows, too many ſuch reverſed kinds of *Evangeliſts* we now have, who with as great deſign unteach Divinity, as the firſt Propugners taught it, and their *number* and *boldneſs* have ſo encreas'd ſince the return of our *peace*, that ſure the next Age will have little cauſe to think *Religion* had any ſhare in the *Reſtoration*. Thus have we done our parts to ſuperſede that obligation of ſerving God in holineſs, by leaving no God to ſerve; and after the moſt ſignal atteſtation of his Deity in our reſcue, *we* do like thoſe *ingrate perſons*,

perſons, who ſeek to ſubvert thoſe by whom themſelves were eſtabliſht, and *deny* him becauſe he has *own'd* us.

THIS is the *holineſs* wherewith we have ſerv'd him, ſince our being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, and our *righteouſneſs* has been very proportionable, for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of men; we ſhall find the ſame vein of *deceit* run through all tranſactions. A few years ſince Sequeſtration and plunderings, thoſe *whole-ſale robberies* had ſo over-topt the reſt, that like an *Epidemick diſeaſe* they had overwhelm'd, if not the *kind*, yet at leaſt the *notice* of all other Injuſtices: but ſince thoſe *Leviathans* are withdrawn, the *leſſer Devourers* ſupply their place; Fraud ſucceeds to Violence; and in all places, all occaſions of commerce, we ſtill meet with Sequeſtrators. The adulterated wares, and falſe meaſures in *Shops*; the dilatory proceedings, and evaſive tricks in *Law*; the various and unworthy Cheats of *Creditors*, and the mean and diſhoneſt advantages which are watcht in all ſorts of *Contracts*, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our Buſineſs, but our very *recreations* expoſe us to theſe deceits, as ſome of our bankrupted Gameſters can too ſadly witneſs, what troops of *Harpyes* attend thoſe ſports is every mans obſervation: 'Tis ſtrange ſo many ſhould yet be to learn the prudence to avoid ſo known a danger, wherein a man is at once made active and paſſive in the ſame Robbery, and does himſelf defraud his *family* of that, whereof

whereof he is defrauded by *another*. But amongst these many injustices, there is none wherein Men seem generally to find such a gust and sensuality, as those wherein God is concern'd; *twenty* Laybooties humor them not so much as *one* from the Clergy; and if the Quakers should be mustered according to that one Tenet of not paying Tythes, we should indeed find their numbers formidable. How subtle even the rudest persons are in defaulking those dues, we see by every daies experiment, the over-reaching their Minister being the grand Triumph of a Rusticks wit; so that not only their covetousness but their vanity is concern'd in it: I know 'tis the usual *apology* for this kind of Sacriledge, that either the *maintenance* of the Clergy is too much, or their *merit* too little; for the first, I think it may be demonstrated, That there is no *liberal Science*, and but few *Mechanick trades*, from which a man may not hope as plentiful a *subsistence*, as this affords to the generality of its *professors*: However I shall leave those that make this objection to dispute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; desiring them to consider, that whatever the support of the Clergy is, it costs them nothing; no man having Purchast more, than what remains of the Estate, after his Tyth is paid. As to the second, I confess 'tis extremely to be wisht, that the *negligence* and *vice* of Some did not give too much *pretence* to the Allegation; and to such I cannot but apply the words of our *Saviour*, Mat. 18. 7. *woe be to the man*

man by whom the offence cometh; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to juſtifie the detention of their *legal rights*: for till the Law which has aſſign'd them, delegate the Forfeiture to me, the greateſt *enormities* of my Paſtor, cannot entitle *me* to any thing that is *his*: And indeed what blame ſoever is really due to *ſome*, we muſt expect it ſhould extend to *all*, if the Accuſers were to have the benefit of the Mulct; and (as in the late confuſions) all Miniſters ſhould be made *ſcandalous*, in order to the making them *poor*.

'TWERE eaſie to draw up a far larger Catalogue of thoſe *injuſtices* we daily commit; for as a man has divers other concerns beſides his goods, ſo he may be injur'd in all thoſe: and truly the iniquity of theſe daies, ſeems fully commenſurate to all the ſuffering capacities of mankind: we *weigh* our own and others Concerns, in very *differing balances*, and *offer* thoſe Injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience *ſuffer*: How nicely Jealous is every one of us of his *own* Repute, and yet how maliciouſly Prodigal of *other mens*? ſo that Defamation is become one of our main *Topicks* of diſcourſe, furniſhes entertainment to all companies; the *preſent* owe their Divertiſement to the *abſent*, and many would be drein'd quite dry, were it not for this reſerve, which like an unexhauſtible ſpring, ſtill ſupplies freſh matter of talk. In like manner how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our *own bodies*, and yet how barbarouſly inconſiderate are we of *others*, to whom we do the greateſt

greateſt outrages rather than uſe any violence to our Paſſion, or reſtrain an angry Humor: only I confeſs there is one Inſtance, wherein though we are *unjuſt*, we are not ſo *partial*; but expoſe our ſelves alſo, and that is in the caſe of *Duells*, a barbarous cuſtom wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the Wickedneſs or Folly be greater; yet it maintains its way in ſpight of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiſer: Of this there are too many, and too noted inſtances ſince our reſtoration, as if we were ſo enamour'd of *deſtruction*, that when we are prevented of it from our *Enemies*, we ſeek it from *one another*, or thought *publick Peace* ſo intolerable, that when 'tis caſt upon us (as ſure ours, if ever any may be ſaid to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our reſcue from that dull quiet, and court the utmoſt *miſchiefs*, to avoid the oppreſſion of the greateſt *happineſs*. Thus perverſly do we countermine Gods purpoſes of kindneſs, and when he has ſecur'd us, ſolicitouſly ſeek to be deliver'd from our ſafety; project new *dangers*, and dare his power with a yet harder Task, the *delivering us from our ſelves*: And whilſt we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our ſelves to enjoy.

AND as upon this general view, we appear very ill managers of our Peace, ſo ſhall we much more, if we reflect on thoſe many particular bleſſings which are wrapt up in that, of which we make ſo perverſe uſe, that we therein no leſs

violate *Sobriety*, than we have already appear'd to do *piety* and *righteouſneſs*; ſo filling up the meaſure of our iniquity by tranſgreſſing all the fudamental rules of Chriſtianity, *living* neither *ſoberly, righteouſly, nor Godly in this preſent world*, Tit. 2. 12. And of thoſe *advantages* which are the appendages to Peace, there are two moſt eminent; *Plenty* and *Liberty*, both of which are the more remarkable in our preſent quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the firſt, we know the *late times of rapine*, had torn from many among us their whole ſubſiſtence, ſo entirely deſpoil'd them that they were reduc'd to *Jobs* condition, and connected the two extreme points of Birth and Death, by a middle ſtate of the like nakedneſs and deſtitution: and to ſuch, our late *reſtoration* was a kind of Civil *reſurrection*; rais'd them like *Eliſha*'s dry bones, from the moſt hopeleſs ſtate, and by a ſucceſſive poſſeſſon of their own *Inheritances*, made them *heirs to themſelves*. And though all were not ſo wholly diveſted, yet like thoſe *Canaanites* whom the *Jews* did not extirpate, they were put under Tribute: and while perſons who knew ſo well how to exact were *Lords Paramount*, a bare being was all could be expected, they ſeem'd rather Stewards than Owners of their *fortunes*, and had rather the trouble than advantage of their *Managery*: And who would not think that this ſo long want of plenty, ſhould have taught us ſobriety in the uſing it; that *deſuetude* ſhould have worn out the skill of *luxury*, and we ſhould not have known

known how to be riotous: but alas, our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular, no one of our vanities is fall'n into oblivion, but on the contrary the art of Voluptuousness so improved, as if all the time that was lost from the *Practick*, had been spent in the *Theory*, and we had for so many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of excess. Indeed it is too sure we retain'd the *affection* when we had lost the *power* of rioting; and 'tis not our prosperity seduces us, but we it. For as the *Sun* though it lends its rayes to the begetting of the vilest *Insects*, yet makes no such production but upon apt matter, *slime* and *putrefaction*: so neither would the most opulent fortune make us sensual, did it not find us dispos'd and prepar'd for it. How forcible those *propensions* are, appears by the multitude of *objects* on which they work; For they had need be strong Inclinations that take in all Opportunities, nay possibilities of actuating themselves, and such 'tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of ministring to luxury, which we use not to that purpose. Our *Meat* is no longer apportioned to our Hunger, but our Tasts: so that the *Stomach* is made meerly passive in the matter of Eating; serves only to receive those loads we charge it with, whilest its Elections and Choices are forestall'd by the *palate* or *phancy*; nay, 'tis not permitted so much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuse what is either for kind or quantity destructive to it: We do with studied mixtures force our reluctting

appetites, and with all the Spells of *Epicuriſm*, conjure them up that we may have the pleaſure of laying them again. Thus unworthily *treacherous* are we to Nature, which while we pretend to *relieve*, we *oppreſs*, by giving her not only beyond her need, but ſufferance: And to ſhew we are no leſs dextrous in mixing *ſins* than *meats*; our very *Pride* (though in its ſelf an intellectual vice) mingles with our *Gluttony*, every thing is inſipid that is not coſtly; and it is thought an ignoble Peaſant-like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a Gentleman, whoſe ſingle Ordinary coſts not as much as would be (and himſelf would perhaps ſome years ſince have thought) a fair exhibition for ſome whole families. And that we may not be charg'd with *partial intemperance*, we go not leſs in that of drink, wherein we are ſo nice and critical, that 'tis become a ſpecial skill and faculty to *judge of liquors*: But how great ſoever our *curioſity* be, 'tis ſure our *exceſs* is greater, and does not only over-match but ſupplant it; there being no drink ſo unpleaſant which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our *reaſon*, that to oppreſs it, we are content to expoſe our darling, and do violence to our very *ſenſe*. How unhappily predominant this brutiſh Vice is, need not here be told, ſince it too evidently atteſts its ſelf, to every mans obſervation, it no longer ſeeking the ſhelter of night and darkneſs, but impatient of ſuch delay, appears in the broadeſt light; and he is now a

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slow-paced drunkard, that has not finisht his *course,* perhaps begun another, before the *Sun* has ended his: nay, so is the Scene chang'd, that *sobriety* is become the reproachful thing, such as even those who value it dare not own, and are either driven to *preserve* it by shifts and artifices, or else chuse to *abandon* it rather than hazard the scandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this sin has for the propagating its self, for 'tis impossible *Bestiality* should be so universally agreeable to mankind, that all should pursue it out of *appetite* and liking: 'tis this Fear that engages many in it; and though it have too many *voluntiers,* yet sure 'tis this *press* that helps to make up its *numbers,* which as it speaks the great baseness of those who are thus asham'd both of Piety and Humanity, and had rather cease to be *men,* than appear to be *Christians*; so is it a sad indication of National impiety, a fatal Symptome that we have neer fill'd up the measure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced against those who *call evil good, and good evil,* Esa. 5.20. which sure was never more palpably done than in this instance, wherein *temperance* is branded for *ill nature,* and dulness of humor; whilest the most *swinish Excess* must pass for *sociableness, friendship,* and *hospitality*; names which have been so long prostituted that they have lost their native use, and men have forgot those very distant things to which they originally belong'd, yet sure such once there were: God made us *sociable creatures,* and we might still continue so

upon the ſtrength of that firſt principle, and need not owe our *intercourſe* to our *debaucheries*; no, nor our friendſhips neither, which have been ſo far from being preſerv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviouſly, and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole ſpecies of *real* Friendſhips ſeems to be extinct, ſince this *fictitious* ſort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themſelves with their friends, and all other communications are tranſmuted into that of Sin, for we daily ſee thoſe, who cleave the moſt inſeparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do nor ſuffer any thing elſe: And ſure if this be *friendſhip*, 'tis ſuch a reverſt kind of it as muſt have as prepoſterous a *Definition*; for none that have yet been given by *Divines* or *Philoſophers* will fit it. The like may be ſaid of *hoſpitality*, which ſure is in its proper nature of a very diſtant make from this; deſign'd to *relieve* Strangers, not *burthen* them; to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worſe exchange of a Surfet: So that the *ancient* and the *modern* Hoſpitality, differ as much as that of *Melchizedeck* from that of *Circe*; the one refreſhes, the other transforms: And how great a ſhew ſoever of liberality this later may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk *gratis*, that has paid his *reaſon* for his *ſhot*.

AND to both theſe parts of Intemperance, our Uncleanneſs bears full proportion, the one *makes proviſion for the fleſh*, and the other *fulfils the luſts thereof*. To how brutiſh an impudence this

this sin is grown is too visible: we need not trace men into their privacies and receſſes, themſelves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing ſo much as the opinion of being innocent: yea ſo out-dated a *vertue* is Modeſty now become, that even that Sex to which it was once accounted the greateſt ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of *Ruſticity*, and *countrey breeding*: whether this pulling down the *fence* be an Indication they are willing to lie *common*, I ſhall not determine: but ſure that very free, and confident behaviour now in uſe, is too apt to invite aſſaults, and takes off all that Extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that Sex upon the ſuppoſition of their being ſeduced? Thus do we publiſh our ſin as *Sodom*, and if we conſider how much boldneſs it has gain'd ſince the return of our *proſperity*; twill be probable that ours alſo has been fomented by *fulneſs of bread, and abundance of Idleneſs*, Ez. 1. 6. That our Plenty is very ſubſervient to it, appears by the *vaſt expence* wherewith many men manage this vice: And that our Idleneſs is ſo too, is no leſs evident by the *large portions of time* that are ſpent in thoſe purſuits, it being as the great deſign, ſo the eſpecial buſineſs of too many mens lives. As for the *remedy* which God has aſſign'd, it ſerves now only to exaſperate the *diſeaſe*. Marriage with too many only advances ſimple-fornication to adultery, and ſuperadds perjury to uncleanneſs; thoſe ſacred bands are like *Samſons* withs, broken upon every aſſault of

the *Philiſtins*, and the very thought of being confin'd makes men more apt to range; For alas, 'tis not their *needs* but their *Phancies* they are to provide for, and that is ſo endleſs, that the greateſt liberty of *Polygamy* would never ſatisfie it: the ſame quarrel would lie then to multiplied wives, which does now to ſingle; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous ſoever their *flock* were, 'twould not ſecure their poor neighbours only *Lamb*, eſpecially when 'tis conſider'd, that in this they gratifie two ſins at once, their *vanity* as well as their *luſt*; their complacence in *undermining* the Husband, being generally as great, as that in *enjoying* the Wife. And if *Pride* abſtractedly and in its own nature be, as *Solomon* ſays, *an abomination to the Lord*, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it muſt be infinitely more ſo, and aſcertain a concurrence of thoſe *Judgments*, which are ſingly threatned to each of thoſe *Sins*; what thoſe are, I wiſh guilty perſons would ſeriouſly ponder, and then they would ſurely think their momentary pleaſures much overbought. But alas, ſuch a faſcinating ſin this is, as allows men no liberty of conſideration, they go on as the *wiſe-man* ſays, *Prov.* 7. 22. with the ſame ſtupidity that *an Ox goeth to the ſlaughter*: or, *a fool to the correction of the ſtocks*; and while every body elſe obſerves the *Effects* of their Vice in their waſted *bodies*, and ruin'd *eſtates*; themſelves are the laſt that diſcern it, purſue the *courſe* till the very laſt remains of ſtrength and wealth are exhauſted, and nothing left them but

diſeaſe

diſeaſe and *beggery*. Of the truth of this, there have been too many ſad examples, though it ſeems not yet enough, to give caution to others.

And to theſe *luſts of the fleſh*, we ſpare not to add thoſe of the *Eye* alſo, for ſo ſurely we may properly call all thoſe *Luxuries* which adapt themſelves peculiarly to that Faculty, ſuch are the *gaity* of Apparel, *richneſs* of Furniture, and all the *ſplendor* of Equipage, which has no propriety to any other ſenſe, but that of *ſeeing*, and is loſt if it be not lookt on: And though theſe ſeem to differ much from that *Covetouſneſs* which St. *John* is ſuppoſed to comprehend in that Phraſe, the one being the *tenacity*, the other the *profuſion* of Money; yet they are but ſeveral branches of the ſame Sin, and are diverſified only by a various application to the *Object*: for in ſtrict ſpeaking, he that covets Gold and Silver to lay on his *back*, is as properly *covetous*, as he that deſigns it only to fill his *coffers*. But beſides the propriety theſe *exceſſes* have to that title, they have no leſs claim to that enſuing, *The Pride of Life*; it being evident that they are both Effects and Fomenters of Pride: and ſure this ſets but an ill Character upon them, that when the *Apoſtle* has divided all the *luſts* of the world into *three ſorts*, theſe bid ſo fair to *two* of them. I would not here be underſtood to condemn that Decency and moderate Expence, which agree to the ſeveral ranks and qualities of Perſons, there being not only a *lawfulneſs*, but ſome kind of *civil neceſſity* for ſuch Diſtinctions: nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted

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in Habit, than in Title or Eſtate: That which I accuſe is quite another thing, it being that inordinate profuſion which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the Perſon, but the proportion of his rank and condition; and ſo confounds that diſtinction it ſhould preſerve, and levels us the wrong way: it being more tolerable that all ſhould be *Peaſants*, than all *Lords*. And this is the irregularity that many ſeem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but thoſe of the moſt diſtant qualities, there ſeeming now no other *meaſure* than the utmoſt extent of their *money* or *credit*; the later whereof is often ſo ſtretcht, that it not only cracks its ſelf, but by an unhappy contagion, breaks thoſe it deals with, and like a *Granado* tears Towns in pieces: The many ruin'd Families of *Tradeſmen* do too ſadly atteſt this; would God our *Gallants* would conſider how unequal it is, that many ſhould want *neceſſary cloathing*, only to maintain the *ſuperfluity* of theirs; an Injuſtice which not only upon a *religious*, but *politick* account deſerves the ſevereſt Reproof, and ſince *Divine* Laws will not reſtrain it, 'twere well if *Humane* were provided: though I confeſs, 'twere not eaſie to find out penalties to deter thoſe whom the wants ſo uſually attending theſe exceſſes will not diſcourage. This ſort of *vanity* was once thought peculiar to *women*, and though I cannot ſay that the ſexes have exchang'd faults, (becauſe each ſtill keeps its own, together with thoſe of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated

municated them, and as the *women* of this Age have transcrib'd *masculine* Vices, so the *men* have *feminine*; this particularly, wherein they seem fully to answer the Copy, they being as Critically knowing in all the mysteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their *speculations* to *practice*, as any the most extravagant female. Indeed both the one and the other pursue this *folly* with so great an expence of Care, Time, and Money, as if to be fine and happy were the same thing, and their *bodies* had been design'd for their Cloaths, rather than their *cloaths* for their Bodies.

AND now when all these luxuries are to be serv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that shall supply them; and that will unfold the riddle so frequent among us, of so many being poorer since they recovered their estates, than when they wanted them: Our *revenue* how large soever, is so clogg'd and encumber'd with our *vices*, that they moulder away, and only serve to carry other mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no such unmerciful *exactors* as our own Lusts, the one gleans after the other, till they induce such a scarcity as the Prophet *Joel* describes 1. 4. *That which the Palmer-worm hath left, hath the Locust eaten, and that which the Locust hath left, hath the Canker-worm eaten, and that which the Canker-worm hath left, hath the Caterpillar eaten*: So that in effect we have only changed our oppressors, and are as much or more exhausted by our sins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumstance that now we

we have the *guilts* as well as the *ſufferings*: Thus do we rob our ſelves, and create *want* in the midſt of all that *abundance* God has given us, uſing our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg.* 19. force and proſtitute it till we deſtroy it; and the ſimilitude holds in this alſo, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us phancy what we will, certainly our *ſuperfluities* are more the *poors* Right than *ours*, aſſign'd to them by God the grand Proprietor. So that our Exceſſes have beſides their proper *guilt*, that of *injuſtice* ſuperadded; and when the cry of the *poor* ſhall be joyn'd to thoſe of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer ſleep.

THIS is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long ſince that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *meaſures* of our duties or puniſhments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the Impoſers: And then how did we gaſp to be under the conduct and Protection of *known determinate Laws*? Yet now we have them, who conſiders them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licenciouſneſs* of Inferiors, and the *remiſneſs* of Superiors, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *uſe*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they ſignifie, and though there be never ſo many *new* Laws made to aſſert the *old*, yet we ſee they ſerve for little but to partake of the ſame contempt with the others, and are but like the *Chimeras* of an *Utopian State*, ſage-

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ly contriv'd, but to no purpose. 'Tis the Execution of Laws that gives them a real and effective being, and without that, amidst our great volumes we are yet destitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that *Axiome*, that *'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are*. Indeed if we remember how the Statutes of *Omri* were kept, with what a tameness the severest Impositions of the *late Usurpers* were submitted to, we have reason to think *coercion* is the surest Principle of *vulgar obedience*; though withal it sets but an ill mark upon us, who know so much better how to be *slaves* than *subjects*. And as we are restor'd to our *civil* Liberty, so as a branch or consequent of that, we are to our *personal* also: We were lately in the condition Christ foretold to St. *Peter*, carried by others whither we would not, *Jo.* 21. 18. but now we gird our selves and go whither we will; and alas, what use do many of us make of this *freedom*? Is it not visible, that neither our publick or private affairs are the better attended: But on the contrary we are in a restless pursuit of impertinent or vicious *pastimes*, go pilgrimages to our *pleasures*, wander about from this sport, that meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the world, and are as much strangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain'd thence: And for such I know not whether the former restraint be not eligible, to be a *prisoner* being a kind of rescue to him, that would otherwise be a *vagrant*.

THESE

THESE are the *uſes* we make of thoſe *advantages* whereof God has repoſſeſt us. I know 'tis too envious a task to diſtribute theſe accuſations to every Rank and Order of men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wiſh that not only ſuch *degrees*, but each *perſon* would adapt to himſelf his *peculiar ſhare*, wherein contrary to other *dividends*, I fear the only Immodeſty and Injuſtice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himſelf. However, 'tis ſure in the groſs they make up the *Character* of a moſt barbarouſly *ungrateful Nation*. God was pleaſed to return our *peace*, before we had forſaken our *ſins*, as if he meant to try our ingenuity; that we who had been ſo much worſe than beaſts under the former method, that no ſtripes would diſcipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with theſe cords of a man: but we have put off not only *piety* but *humanity*, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from *Moſes's paſſionate Apoſtrophe, Do ye thus requite the Lord O fooliſh people and unwiſe, Deut.* 32. 6. Unwiſe indeed, that from the moſt benigne *purpoſes* of God, extract nothing but our own *miſchief*: are the poorer for his Liberalities, and the worſe for his Goodneſs; by a prepoſterous uſe ſo wear out our Bleſſings, that they ceaſe to be, at leaſt to be *Bleſſings*: And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to aſſume, they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatalleſt *Curſes*, more heavy than thoſe which were

were originally design'd as such; that degeneration adding malignity, and no *Fury* being so extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and *irritated Love*. Gods *mercies* are like those *pictures*, which according to the different position of the beholder, carry different Representations, if we will still stand on the wrong side, and not take them in their more *amiable* appearance, we shall find they can put on a *dreadful*: his Goodness will not be finally unoperative, if we will not permit it to lead us to *repentance*, 'twill drive us to *destruction*. I am sure we have all reason to expect he should exert his power as eminently against us, as he has done for us, unless perhaps he sees that is not necessary to our ruine, for indeed let him but stand by and not interpose his omnipotence for us, he may trust us to be his *Executioners*, our Vices having a *natural* as well as *moral* Efficacy to destroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reason of his seeming connivance, that he forbears to strike us, to give us up to those more fatal wounds we inflict on our selves; this alas we have too much cause to fear, for 'tis sure 'tis not our *innocence* that gives us Impunity, but 'tis more than probable 'tis our *incorrigibleness*; that God gives us over with a *why should ye be smitten any more*? Will not prostitute his Judgments, but as the basest of *Malefactors* leave us to the basest of *Executioners*, and let our iniquities become our ruine. This as it is the severest purpose God can entertain towards us, so 'tis our most important concern to avert. And

O that we, who have ſo perverſly reſiſted all the deſigns of his *love*, would now try to defeat that of his *anger*, rob him of thoſe inteſtine avengers within our own breaſts, thoſe *fleſhly luſts which fight againſt the Soul*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his Wrath, and make us more miſerable than *Hell* its ſelf could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us, to ſeek an eſcape from ſo *formidable miſchiefs*: O let us not contract one minutes delay, let us caſt our ſelves at the feet of our offended God, and as thoſe who are condemn'd to diſgraceful Executions, uſe to petition for ſome death of leſs Infamy, as a *boon* and *favour*, ſo let us beg, that he will pleaſe to think us worth his *own correction*; that whatſoever we ſuffer from his hand, yet that we may not (like to *Herod*) be deliver'd up to the loathſome fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form *Davids choice* into an importunate *prayer*, and earneſtly beg that we may *fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men*, at leaſt not of *our ſelves*, who are more to be dreaded than all our other *Enemies*.

INDEED till we do thus, our proſperities are far from real, and do in this juſtifie our moſt mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worſe, yet ſince 'tis only we that have enervated them, they will ſtand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our *receipts* are ſummed up, God will charge us with them, not as thoſe empty *uſeleſs things*

things we have made them, but as those great and *solid blessings* he intended them. And certainly this is most deplorable ill managery, to reserve nothing to our selves but the *burthen* and *account* of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be answerable for all. In secular things men usually pay with some regret, for those things of which they have only anticipated the *use*: But with what dismal reluctancies shall we come to pay for these, of which we have made no *advantage*, and must therefore pay the dearer because we have not; it being not so much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His *anger* is then only incens'd, when we resist his *love*; and his only quarrel to us is, for frustrating his design of making us happy. And sure those well deserve his wrath, that will provoke it on such terms; yet so perverse is the *choice*, as of all sinners in general, so especially of *this Nation* at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not Madly affect to be so in neither, God grant we may recover the Sobriety to make *wiser elections*, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to stand to the mischiefs of our own wild Option.

THE Reader will perhaps think, I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digression, but the too great *copiousness* of the Theme, must be my *excuse*: such overgrown Vices cannot well be drawn in little, and where there is such a multitude, the most superficial view of Each, is rather

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proportional to a *diſtinct Tract*, than to the *few Pages* it has borrowed in this. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a *private whiſper* ſhall be heard by thoſe, who are deaf to the *loudeſt calls* of Heaven, and have made no other *uſe* of thoſe various and ſignal Providences we have been under, than to defeat the *deſign* of them.

CHAP. IX.

A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes in general.

THESE are ſome of thoſe many artifices, whereby Satan like a cunning *Pick-lock*, ſlyly robs us of our grand *treaſure*, the power and efficacy of our Chriſtianity, and leaves us only the empty *Casket*, the name and formal Profeſſion, that which ſerves only to make us *proud*, not *rich*, *confident*, not *ſafe*: And God knows, ſo many are daily thus befool'd by him, ſo many fall as preys to theſe his *Stratagems*, as might, one would think, glut the eagereſt malice, and ſuperſede all farther deſigns: but ſo inſatiate is this grand Devourer, that *retail-prizes*, though never ſo frequent, do rather enrage than ſatisfie his *appetite*: He is Enemy not only to this or that man, but to *mankind* in groſs, and therefore as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove indefatigable

defatigable enough for so many distinct pursuits, he contrives more compendious methods of destruction: Frames such *Engines* as take off whole ranks, nay, troops; compounds such active *Poyson*, as like a Pestilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a Mischief to annoy the *outward parts*, it is his Mastery to spread an unseen venome in the *Bowels*, thence to diffuse its self through't, mix with the vital spirit, and convert that *kindly heat* which should animate, into those wild *irregular flames* which ravine and consume. And this is done, by that Pestilential spirit of *division*, that heat of *disputation*, which has for so many ages possest and wasted the *Catholick Church*; and by an unhappy kind of Magick transform'd the zeal of Christian *practice*, into an itch of unchristian *Dispute*; made the *questions* about our *Creed* more numerous than the *letters* of it; and by multitudes and contrariety of *Paraphrases* so confounded and obscur'd the *Text*, that what was anciently the badge and *tessera* of Christian Communion, serves us for no other purpose but as an occasion of breaking it.

SO long as the Church retain'd the *simplicity* of Christian doctrine, lookt on her *faith* as the Foundation of her *obedience*, and endeavour'd to propagate to her Children such an understanding of the one, as was most apt to promote the other; She happily made good the title *Christ* gives her, *Can. 6.* of his *love*, his *dove*, his *undefil'd* one: but when the *Serpent* had once got into this Paradise, infus'd his *subtilties*, and nice intricacies

into mens Brains; and leaſt that ſhould not be ruinous enough, his *venome* alſo into their Hearts: Then began all thoſe unhappy *Metamorphoſes*, in compariſon of which, thoſe of the Poets are as *trivial* as they are *Fabulous*: then that *faith* which was once inſeparably joyn'd with the *patience* of the Saints, forſook that tame company, and linkt its ſelf with the moſt contrary qualities of *wrath* and *bitterneſs*; and thoſe whoſe Profeſſion it was to *reſiſt* unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin, *purſued* to blood thoſe that reſiſted them in any of their ſpeculations: Then that paſſive Valour which had rendred them ſo venerable to their Heathen Enemies, converted ſome, tired out others, and amaz'd all; ſadly degenerated into that active malice, which from *perſecuted Chriſtians*, entituled them to that monſtrous ſtyle of *Chriſtian perſecutors*. And that *ardent love*, which had offered up ſo many Holocauſts to God, was ſupplanted by that *fiery hatred*, that made no leſs acceptable oblations to Satan.

THIS miſerable and deſtructive *change* was ſo much the intereſt of the Enemy of Souls, that we cannot wonder he ſhould ſo ſtudiouſly promote it; and indeed never did he at once ſo approve his *malice* and *ſubtilty*, I would I could not ſay ſucceſs alſo, as in this *deſign*; in compariſon whereof, all his other Projects ſpeak him but a Puny, this is his one *Goliah Stratagem* which has ſerv'd him not only to *defie*, but even *defeat the Armies of the living God*.

NOR is his Sagacity more obſervable in the *choice*,

choice, and main drift of the Design, than in the *ways* of Effecting it; had he brought into the *Primitive* Church those large scrolls of disputable points, wherewith he has fill'd the Modern; that more charitable Age must needs have startled and discern'd, that that *seeming Jealousie* for Truth, was indeed nothing but a *real design* against Peace, and would surely never have parted with that sacred *depositum*, that precious legacy so lately bequeath'd by Christ, for those vain janglings, those School subtilties which now entertain the world. But as he that would divert a man from the *guard* of some important Treasure, alarms him in some other of his greatest *interests*; so he at first raises up *Heresies* of the greatest magnitude, whose blasphemous consequencies so shook the whole Fabrick of Religion, that what was *Uzzahs* Rashness seemed then every mans advised Duty, to *put his hand to the upholding of the tottering Ark.* How could those who had been baptiz'd into the faith of the Blessed Trinity, suffer the *Arians* to rob them of the Second Person, the *Macedonians* of the Third, the *Valentinians* and *Manichees* so to despise the First, as to set up against him a Rival principle of being: How could those who had so solemnly renounc'd the World, the Flesh and the Devil, see them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous *Gnosticks*? these were such invasions as seemed to commissionate all that could weild the sword of the Spirit to take it up, and engage in this Warfare. But all this while 'twas a sad *Di-*

lemma to which the Church was driven; if ſhe gave countenance to theſe *ſeducers*, ſhe betrayed her *faith*; if ſhe entred the *conteſt* ſhe violated her *unity*; the one would undermine her *foundation*, the other would make a breach in her *walls*.

AND the Devil was too old an Artiſt to loſe the *advantage*, he knew well that even a juſt and neceſſary *defence*, does by giving men acquaintance with War take off ſomewhat from the abhorrence of it, and inſenſibly diſpoſe them to farther *Hoſtilities*, and therefore he fail'd not to provide *ſparks* for that matter, which was now grown ſo combuſtible; nor did he always ſend them from the *bottomleſs pit*, but ſometimes borrowed fire from the *Altar* to conſume the Votaries, and by the mutual colliſion of well meant *zeal* ſet even Orthodox Chriſtian in *flame*. A memorable inſtance of this was the *diſpute about Eaſter*, wherein while the veneration they had of the glorious Reſurrection of *Chriſt*, prompted them to commemorate it in the exacteſt manner they could, the *Serpent* creeps into this Paradiſe, and though they had the ſame common end, yet on occaſion of ſome little diſſenting in the way, the heat of *devotion* inſenſibly degenerated into that of *contention*; and by being very tenacious of a circumſtance of that *celebration*, they loſt the more eſſential requiſite that of *Charity*: kept the Feaſt indeed, but with the leven of malice, and abſurdly commemorate the redintegration of his *Natural* Body, by mutilating and dividing his *Myſtical*. So likewiſe in the buſineſs of Rebaptizati-

on,

on, while one side in a pious abhorrence of *Heresie*, thought the stain like that of Original Sin could not be done away by any Purgation less solemn than that of Baptism, and the other in a just reverence of ancient *custom*, and jealousie of *innovation* opposed it: the Dispute lasted till the Scene was changed, and those who deliberated of the manner of *receiving* Hereticks into the Church, were themselves as such *turn'd* out of it. No less well meant were the *Originals* of the *Novatian* and *Donatist* Heresies, as equally unhappy were their *issues*: For in them all, when bitter *Zeal* was once fermented, through its aptitude to receive, and the Devils vigilance to administer occasions, the *Orthodoxy* or Heresie of lives soon became terms out-dated, and men were measur'd only by *opinions*: That *sword of the spirit* which was at first design'd against vicious practices had its edge turn'd against *speculative* notions, in so much, that at last like that of *Joab*, 2 *Sam.* 28.8. it had got such an aptness to fall out, that it was always a ready instrument of Execution, till even a Philosophical point, as that of the *Antipodes* was resolv'd with an *Anathema*, and not to know the Systeme of this *present* World, made forfeiture of that *to come*.

BUT alas these, though great defections from Primitive unity, were but modest essays, and feeble assaults, compar'd with those which infested the succeeding ages: This *root of bitterness* was then but a *probationer* in the soyle, and though it sent forth some offsets to preserve its

kind; yet *Satan* was fain to be at ſome pains to cheriſh and nurſe them up, placed them under the ſhadow of the *Sanctuary*, and got them like the treacherous Ivy, ſupported by that *piety* they were deſigned to deſtroy; but it was not long ere they had got firmer rooting and ſtrength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every Diſpute in Religion grew *prolifical*, and in ventilating one queſtion, many new ones were ſtarted: And as *queſtions* grew numerous, ſo did *Sects* too; every Opinion almoſt conſtituted a new party, and thoſe again ſubdivided into many others, ſo that of all the firſt Violators of Primitive unity, we ſcarce find any, who did not revenge their *Schiſm* upon themſelves, by ſeparating from one another, as they had all done from the *Church*; till at laſt the progeny both of Sects and Opinions grew ſo numerous, that he who would exact an account, muſt be ſent like *Abraham*, to the Sky or to the Shore: The Stars or Sands, being as apt a ſubject of *Arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to paſs, that *Satan* now may leave his toilſome labour of compaſſing the Earth; men do his buſineſs for him, giving him leiſure to be only a Cheerful *Spectator* of their *Divinity-prizes*; the bloody combates of *Eccleſiaſtick Gladiators*.

AND that he may be ſecur'd never to want that pleaſing divertiſement, the *later Ages* have been careful to train him up *Combatants*, it being now become a diſtinct ſort of Learning, a new

Species

Species of Divinity, to raise nice *questions*, create new *difficulties*, branch out with fond *distinctions* our holy Faith, which the pious Simplicity of the first Christians, receiv'd to practice; not to read upon as an *Anatomy*, unbowel and dissect to try experiments, much less to bring into the *Theatre*, there made to fight and bleed, to shew men sport, and try the skill of the unhappy sword-men, and Masters of defence. *The form of sound words*, which in its native frame and constitution, was most enlivening and Salubrious, dissolv'd and melted by *Chimical preparation*, ceases to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the *Alembeck*, and hopes of an *Elixir*, insensibly evaporates, and vanishes to Air; or leaves in the recipient a foul *Empyreuma*, or fretting corrosive. An endless dotage about names and words, and then as endless quarrel for them; appearing the commensurate *effect* of the long studies of those *Distillers* in Divinity, who boast its Sublimation.

IT is indeed a thing worthy of the greatest both wonder and lamentation to see how the plainest, and most *simple proposition*, when it falls into the hands of these *Artists*, is mangled and disjointed, is rarified, exalted, and refin'd: He whose leisure, or indeed whole life, would serve him to survey all the subtile Divisions, and Distinctions of the *School-men*, would sure resolve, they had the power of working *Miracles*. *Questions* in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the *loaves* in our *Saviours*. But sure the event of the

Miracles

Miracles are very deſperate, no ſolid nouriſhment being deriv'd by the one, but on the contrary, Stones given us in ſtead of Bread, and thoſe too for the worſt purpoſes, even to fling at one another, as if becauſe *ſtoning* was the death of the firſt Chriſtian *Martyr*, we deſign'd his *Charity* to the ſame fate with himſelf; that *divine Goſpel grace* having ſince faln under as thick a ſhowr, and with this ſharp aggravation too, that whereas he ſuffered from *Jews*, *Chriſtians* are become its *executioners*: whileſt thoſe who pretend to be *Champions* of the Faith, Irrefragable, Angelical, and Seraphical *Doctors*, not only fill the Church with quarrels whileſt they live, but bequeath them in their writings to poſterity; as *Ziſca* is ſaid to have done his skin, to be made an Incentive to war and confuſion.

IT was the policy of *Julian* to ſhut up the Fountains of humane learning from the Chriſtian youth, leſt they ſhould there gain ſuch acuteneſs, as might render them the more formidable Adverſaries to *Paganiſm*: but could he have foreſeen that they would have employed thoſe Weapons not againſt the *common Enemy*, but *one another*, he would ſurely have revers'd the Stratagem, freely opened thoſe *Magazeens* whence they might furniſh themſelves for their mutual ruine, and have as ſolicitouſly *promoted* their Learning, as ever he *obſtructed* it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane learning in general, or make it ſuch a *Moabite*, or *Ammonite*, that however it be admitted in *civil*

vil Converse, must be interdicted the *Sanctuary*. Our Religion prescribes us rational not brutish Sacrifices, and therefore despises not any of those *advantages* which may improve our reason, exalt the *man* and depress the *beast* in us: yet sure we shall derogate very impiously from Christs prophetick office, if we allow not divinity to be the Supreme and noblest Science; such as is to be serv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by those inferior: but that just order seems now to be inverted; *divine* learning is brought down to *humane*; the *Simplicity* of Christian doctrine so perplext and confounded with *Philosophical nicities*, that *Plato* and *Aristotle* are become the Umpires of our Religion, and we must go ask *Heathens* how far we shall be *Christians*. Those *deep things of God* as the *Apostle* calls them 1 *Cor.* 2.10. and of which he pronounces the natural man an incompetent Judge, are yet brought before *that Tribunal*, subjected to be scanned by rules of Art: but alas, our line is too short to sound those Depths. Men rashly undertake to understand *incomprehensible*, to order *infinite*, define *ineffable* things: and then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no visible truth, wherein to Center, *error* is as wide as mens *Phancies*, and may wander to Eternity: while multitudes run cariers in the dark, it is not strange to have them justle, and overthrow each other.

AND doubtless were the *Controversies* which have so long harrased the Church throughly examin'd

min'd, many of them would be found of this nature. An *humble belief* has been judg'd too ſluggiſh and dull an exerciſe for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take *faith's word* that ſo it is, unleſs *reaſon* will be her *ſurety*, and ſhew them how; but ſure it had been much for the *peace* of the Church and *ſafety* of Souls, if Myſteries had been permitted to be *Myſteries*; that thoſe ſublimer parts of our *faith* had been entertain'd with more veneration, and leſs of *diſquiſition*, and that while even the learned'ſt do acknowledge them to be *Abyſſes*, they would not confute that confeſſion, by attempting to *fathom* them. But alas, ſo prepoſterous has been the procedure, that thoſe things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur'd to diſcover themſelves, while in the mean, the plainer, and more acceſſible *truths*, as if deſpicable while eaſie, are clouded and obſcur'd; ſo many ſubtile *queries* rais'd about them, that the *Theorick* of Chriſtianity is become harder than the *Practick*; a grace is much more readily acquir'd than defin'd, and that *key of knowledge* which ſhould give us entrance into the cloſets and receſſes of religion, is by ſo much tampering and wrenching made *uſeleſs*; ſerves only to buſie us at the door, and ſo in effect proves rather a *bar to keep* us *out*, than a *key to let* us *in*. Thus perverſe are the *contradictions* of humane deprav'd nature, which like our *firſt parents* take it unkindly, that God has reſerv'd any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down

down his *enclosures,* to rob him of his *peculiar*; and yet in the mean, as industriously contrive to rob our selves of our own, to cancelling both parts of Gods distribution, neither leaving *secret things to the Lord our God,* nor *the revealed ones to us and our children,* Deut. 29. 29. Certainly the first propagators of our Faith, proceeded at another rate, they well knew that not the *brain* but the *heart,* was the proper *soil* for that celestial Plant, and therefore did not amuse their *Proselytes* with curious questions, but set them to the active part of their religion. We see what brief and plain instructions S. *Peter* gives his *Catechumeni, Act.* 2. 38. *Repent and be baptiz'd every one of you for the remission of sins*: and this it seems as a full preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he there promises upon these only conditions. This was that vigorous Seed which at once *sprung up* suddenly, and *rooted deep* too, and produc'd the liberal harvest of that day: but sure had those three thousand souls, been Catechiz'd by our modern *Casuists,* we had seen a wide difference, not only in the expedition but success. In like manner we see *Act.* 8. how short a Creed qualified in S. *Philips* judgment for the Eunuchs baptism: and we find S. *Paul* whose education enabled him for the subtilest definitions, yet delivers his whole doctrine in this *compendium,* Act. 20. 21. *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*; and 'tis observable how he introduces this with a profession that *he had kept back nothing*

nothing that was profitable for them, Verſ. 20. and ſeconds it V. 27. with another, that *he had not ſhunned to declare unto them the whole councel of God*; from whence 'tis obvious for the ſhalloweſt diſcourſer to inferr, that the whole councel of God as far as it is incumbent for man to know, at leaſt *neceſſitate medii* is compriz'd in that one breviat of Evangelical truth: and certainly whileſt all the *deviſion* of theſe generals, was the diſtributing them into *practice,* they were found moſt fertile ſeminaries of all Vertue; but when they came to be *dichotomiz'd,* and cantond out into curious aerial notions, they loſt their *prolifick* nature: that fruitful land became a wilderneſs, a wild and intricate maze, where men ſooner loſe *themſelves* than find either *truth* or *holineſs.*

WHEN Chriſtianity firſt atteſted its ſelf by *miracles,* it produced in the hearts of its converts, a firm aſſent to the truth of the *Doctrine,* and an awful reverence and adoration of *that God,* who had given ſuch power unto men, awaking them to an Enquiry after *duty,* ſo to propitiate that *omnipotence* whoſe Fury it appear'd impoſſible to bear: And this ſure was a much more *genuine effect,* than if they had buſied themſelves in thoſe many *unprofitable curioſities,* nice, yet bold enquiries into the divine attributes which now a-daies ſerve only to ſupplant that pious veneration we owe to them.

IN like manner the comprehenſive enunciation of Chriſt, *Mar.* 16. 16. *He that believeth ſhall*

shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damn'd, was received by the first Christians, as the condition on which the two so distant states of Salvation or damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the *one,* and avoid the *other.* And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertain'd themselves with the modern dispute, whether some antecedent decree of God had not irreversibly determin'd them, to the one or other; a *disquisition* that has serv'd only to keep us *Idly busie,* set our heads a working, but folds up our *hands* like *Solomon*'s sluggard in our bosoms. So also when S. *Paul* affirms it the design of *Christs giving himself for us, to purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; the *Primitive* Christians had no other design than to comport with that his purpose; to be what he died to make them, and to attest their *Zeal* to good works, by being actually *rich* in them. They took *Christ*'s word, that *he that gave the meanest dole for his sake, should not lose his reward*; thought themselves sure enough upon his promise, and never disputed the proportion either of Worth or Congruity between the work and wages; and had the *Modern* done the like, our *works* had not so unhappily evaporated into *words,* we had talkt less and done more.

'TWERE easie to draw the Parallel through all the points which busied the devotion of the *first* Ages, and the curiosity of the *later*: By all which it would be evident, how much Christian

ſtian doctrine has *loſt* in its Efficacy, ſince it *gain'd* in its Bulk: how we have embaſed our *Coin* by multiplying it; and have divided our *ſum* into ſo many, and ſo ſmall Fractions, as our *Arithmetick* can ſcarce *number*, never *unite*. We ſhould think him very ridiculous, that ſhould hope to advance his *crop*, by grinding the *corn* he ſowes: yet methinks, this has bin the Method of our Spiritual husbandmen, who have ſcarce ſuffered one grain of our faith to ſcape Entire. 'Tis ſaid that the *Ant*, when ſhe lays in her winter ſtock, bites the ends of the *Corn*, as being *Naturaliſt* enough to know that will certainly prevent its ſprouting: And ſure that little contemptible creature whom *Solomon* appoints to preach *induſtry* to the *ſluggard*, may in this point read *Philoſophy* too, to our greateſt *Doctors*; convince them that that ſeed which they mangle with ſo many Diſtinctions and Diviſions, will never ſpring up into Chriſtian *practice*: It will rather be like the *Dragons* teeth, *Cadmus* is ſaid to have ſown, whoſe immediate production was a *hoſtile band* combating one another. A *fable* which God knows we have found too ſadly *moraliz'd* in our School contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more *immortal*, our *Serpentine* breed fight but never die, oppoſe but deſtroy not one another.

AND then 'twill not appear ſtrange to ſee the firſt ſeeds of diſcord, ſo prodigiouſly encreas'd, that they now overſpread the face of the Earth: for whereas in all other things there is

is a succession, one generation goes and another comes, and so though the *species* continue, the *Individuals* perish; these seem to have the accurst Priviledge of propagating and not expiring, and to have reconcil'd the procreativeness of *corporeal,* with the duration of *incorporeal* Substances: This is such an advantage toward their *multiplication,* that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them *Swarm*; not like *Bees* to bring profit, but like *Locusts* to devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the *Magicians of Ægypt* to cast them out: for were it possible ever to become *Satans* interest to suppress them, he would certainly find himself in the case of one of his young Conjurers, to have *rais'd* more spirits than he could *lay*. Mens now *irritated Passions,* and formed interests, the great fomenters of disputes, would prove too *sturdy Devils,* even for *Beelzebub* himself to Exorcise.

BUT 'tis too sure his Kingdom will never so divide against its self; it suits not only with his *Nature,* but with his *Ends* to perpetuate our Strifes, and therefore as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to secure his purpose, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attach us. The *Leprosie* which infests the sollider parts of our Religion, has past from the *body* to the very *Garments*; the most exterior *adherencies,* Habits, Gestures, Days, every thing that has but the remotest subserviency to Piety, are become the *objects* of fierce Contests, and have so

encreas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unneceſſary, perhaps impoſſible to add more if he can but keep up theſe, as God knows he is too like to do, his Kingdom will be competently guarded, they being his greateſt *ſecurity* againſt that *power of Godlineſs*, that vital force of Chriſtianity, he ſo much dreads: that they are ſo, is obvious enough to him that takes but the groſſeſt confus'd view of them. But that we may better diſcern the degrees of his *advantage* and our own *miſchief*, 'twill not be amiſs to conſider them more attentively, make ſome diſtinct obſervations, not of *all*, for that were endleſs, but of *ſome* of their moſt eminent *Effects*, which we ſhall find ſo pernicious and deſtructive, as ſufficiently ſpeak their relation, and ſubſerviency to the great *Abaddon*.

AND in the firſt place if we conſider them only *privatively* as they ſupplant and juſtle out our greater concerns, we ſhall find them ſadly miſchievous, indeed to ſuch a degree that were they not chargeable with any *poſitive* Ill, they were by this their meer *negative* Force, competent Inſtruments of our *ruine*. Did they actually convey no venome, yet while they ſubſtract our nouriſhment, their effects will be ſure to be deadly; *Grace* as well as *Nature* being liable to be ſtarv'd as well as poyſoned. *Chriſtianity* is not a dull unactive, but ſtirring buſie State, and therefore we ſtill find it in the *Goſpel* repreſented under the *Metaphors* which imply the greateſt Induſtry and Activity; tis a *trade*, a *watch*,

watch, a *race*, a *combat*, and it assigns us tasks enough to justifie the propriety of the *Tropes*: And therefore as on the one hand the sleepy Professor will at last find he has but dreamt of those glorious Rewards he expects; so on the other, he that frames himself another *Scheme*, that labours but not in Gods vineyard, that busies himself in things extrinsick to that one great *Sphere of motion* the Evangelical Precepts, will finally discern that he has but rolled *Syfiphus* his stone, espous'd a *toyle* under which he may indeed be *weary* and heavy *laden*, but will never find *rest* to his Soul.

AND then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who desires to propagate his own eternal restlesness unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange these *pleasant* and *gainful ones*, which God assigns us, for those *uneasie* and *fruitless*, we impose on our selves. 'Tis true we find too many of those unprofitable works of darkness to busie and employ us: but I think no one, nay I am apt to say not all others together, have proved so effectual to his purpose, as this of raising and maintaining *parties in Religion*. 'Tis too usual a policy of States to secure themselves from the *fear* of a potent Neighbour, by fomenting a civil *discord* in his Kingdom: *Satan* has in this instance found it a lucky Stratagem, it having proved the most powerful revulsive of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our *Machavilions*, but sure he may from his

own experience recommend it with the atteſtation of a *Probatum eſt.*

INDEED this art of diverſion gives him a full ſecurity againſt all he fears in our Chriſtianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himſelf; we know he long ſince had courage to contemn the name even of Chriſt, when invoked by thoſe whoſe practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewiſh Exorciſts,* make no other uſe of Chriſt, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. *Seven ſons of Sceva* are not half ſo terrible to him as *one* St. *Paul,* 'tis him only he fears, that to the *form* has joyn'd *the power of Godlineſs*: That *Exorciſme* he knows he cannot reſiſt, and therefore has very dexterouſly found a way to divert it, by engaging us in thoſe contentions which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profeſſion. By the *confus'd noiſe* of Battel, quite drowning that *voice behind us,* which ſays, *This is the way walk in it.* Nay, by this ſubtilty he does not only divert, but foreſtall alſo; like the *Philiſtines,* allows no Spear or Sword that may be us'd *againſt him,* but takes up all thoſe Inſtruments by which we ſhould work the *work of God.* We know to all affairs of Importance there are three neceſſary *concurrents* without which they can never be diſpatcht; *Time, Induſtry,* and *Faculties*; and the more weighty and difficult the Buſineſs is, the greater Degree of each of theſe is requiſite. Now certainly the *intereſt* of our Souls is not the ſlighteſt *concern* we have: the avoiding eternal

eternal *misery*, the acquiring endless *bliss* is not so trivial, or so easie a matter, as to be the Work of a *moment*, the purchase of some few *yawning wishes*, or *volatile phancies*: He who is to dispense the Rewards, has propos'd us other Conditions, assign'd us Work which takes up no less *time* than that of our *whole lives*; no less *intention* than of our *whole powers*: And then if we suffer any thing else to interpose, and defaulk what is thus entirely requisite, if we cut new *Channels* for that which should run in this one *full current*, 'tis easie to divine what the Event will be: For man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he bestows on one thing, must necessarily be substracted from another. And therefore if our Disputes about Religion entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick Duties; and so whilest we quarrel with *one another*, give our great *Master* too just ground of quarrel with *us all*, by neglecting the great, and indeed only Business entrusted to us.

NOW indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that shall consider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, first for our *time*, they do not only *insensibly* steal away much of it (a modesty which most other diversions do still retain) but *Magisterially* exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it solemnly and avowedly devoted to them; the *scanning old questions*, and *raising new ones*, having been the profest Business of many mens lives;

their very Vocation and Trade wherein they have arrived to ſuch *eminence*, as ſhews they made *liberal oblations* of their Time to it: And of this every age has left ſo many Records, as the meer reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the ſucceeding: And had not *time* a little reveng'd his own quarrel, and conſum'd many of thoſe *writings*, by which himſelf was waſted, the *Hyperbole* would not be very extravagant in this caſe, which we find warrantably us'd in another, *Jo.* 21. that even *the world its ſelf could not contain the Books which have been written.* As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour time; for when men once launch into the vaſt *Sea* of Controverſie, they are toſſed there endleſly, and ſeldom recover a *harbour*, Difficulties like *waves* crouding one upon the neck of another; And accordingly we ſee in *Polemick Diſputes*, how every rejoynder ſwells bigger and bigger, till like *Gehazies cloud*, from a *hand breadth* it over-ſpread the *Heavens*; every little Manual becomes the Parent of vaſt Volumes; and unleſs the evil cure its ſelf by majoration, unleſs the greatneſs of the task bring in deſpair to ſupplant curioſity, and keep men from reading, the *ſpectators* will have as little reſpite, as the *Combatants*, both Writers and Readers will be ſo ingroſt, that they will have little leiſure for any thing elſe. And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag'd deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wiſh they would but ſnatch ſome broken parcel as a *plank* from the common *ſhip-*

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wrack of their time; rescue a few minutes for a sober reflection, and audit what real Profit accrues to them, from the expence of so many precious Hours; how much it advances that grand business for which their Time *here* was allotted, and according to which their Eternity *hereafter* will be awarded: always remembring, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that *time* which should have been so employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehensive *mischief* than this of the *loss of time*, it being that which virtually contains the frustrating of all other Advantages, whereby we should work out our Salvation. The operations even of *Christ* himself were, he tells us, limited to a certain season: *I must work the work of my Father whilest it is day, the night cometh when no man can work*; and if the Night overtake us, it matters not how we are stored with instruments of Action, since they all at once then become useless. Our Laws anciently set a greater *penalty* upon the stealing *Beasts of breed*, than on other Cattel of the *same species*, as calculating the dammage by the possibilities of which the Owner was robb'd. Time is the *universal womb* of things and actions; and therefore when we lose *that*, we suffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our *Rights in reversion* as well as our *Possessions*, our *capacities* as well as *enjoyments*. As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, besides the frustration of her hopes, and child-birth pains sustain'd, acquires an aptitude to miscarry for the future, and never to be able to

bring forth a vital birth: And thus God knows multitudes of *Embryon* purpoſes periſh, and the miſery of it is, they are our beſt that do ſo. We generally purſue our *frivolous projects* with an *active vigour*, but keep our great and concerning *affairs* only in deſign till *death* come and ſurprize us, which like the *fatal Metamorphoſes* the Poets talk of, fixes us in the poſture it finds us, and ſo preſents us to *Judgment*. Now I would know of the moſt eager Contender, whether he would not chuſe then to be found with his hands ſtretcht out in *prayer* to God, or *alms* to the poor, rather than dealing *blows* amongſt his fellow ſervants; if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himſelf into that form he would then appear in, to huſband his little ſpan of time ſo, as may ſtand him in ſtead when time ſhall be no more.

BUT if men will needs be *improvident*, yet why will they be *ridiculous* too, if they will barter away their time, methinks they ſhould at leaſt have ſome eaſe in exchange: but to be induſtrious ill-husbands, to loſe all their *advantage*, and none of their *toil*, is ſuch a ſolemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of Scorn and Wonder; yet this is the very caſe here, our *wranglings* do not only exhauſt our *time*, but our *ſtrength* too: We purſue them with ſo vehement an intention, as if our Faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this ſort of Opponents: We run our ſelves breathleſs in this *race*, where the *prize* is only a few *fading Leaves*, or what is more tranſitory, a little *popular applauſe*; and make not towards

wards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other pursuit. Men macerate their Bodies, and waste their Spirits in *Polemick studies*, prescribe themselves no time of discharge from that *War*, till they are able no longer to weild their *weapons*, and then when meer Impotence makes them *peaceable*, begin to cry out of *contention*, snatch up *Devotion* when Controversie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their Death *pray for that peace* of the Church, which they have made it the business of their life to *disturb*. This as it sufficiently attests what mens thoughts are in their cool blood, what apprehensions they have of the way when they draw near their journeys End; so does it abundantly evince the unspeakable prejudice, Piety receives from our Disputes; Those have the active and *vigorous Abettors*, while That is turn'd off to languishing *bed-rid Votaries*. So that the *division* between these two, is like that of the *Cattel* between *Jacob* and *Laban*, all the stronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God the Scene were not in one respect chang'd, and that the *Syrian* had not here got the better share. But in the mean time what greater advantage can *Satan* wish for, our strength and industry is diverted upon these foreign expeditions, and *Sion* is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, such only as are not able to follow the Camp, and then 'tis not strange to see what successful assaults he has made, that that true *practick vertue* which once made such victorious sallies on the heathen World,

World, is now baffled in its own Quarters, beaten from its Works, and driven to ſeek ſhelter in obſcure corners, immures its ſelf in ſome few private breaſts, and ſo like an exil'd Prince, makes only ſhift to *live* when it ſhould *reign*. But alas, ſhall we for ever ſuffer our ſelves to be thus befool'd, ſhall this his ſtale ſtratagem after ſo many hundred years uſe, nay, and detection too, loſe nothing of its Efficacy? Muſt we always waſte our ſtrength in forging ſhackles for our ſelves? This is ſuch an infatuation as *Hoſea* ſpeaks of, *Chap. 9. 7. The Prophet is a fool, the Spiritual man is mad*: Would God we would once put our ſelves under the diſcipline of ſerious recollection, it might perhaps cure the Phrenſie: Let him who has with unwearied diligence watcht all advantage againſt his *Antagoniſt*; rack'd and tortured every period of his diſcourſe, to make it confeſs an abſurdity: Let him, I ſay, conſider, how much better that *induſtry* had been employed in diſcovering the *fallacies* of our common Adverſary, that old Sophiſter, who puts the moſt *abuſive Elenchs* on us, whileſt we are moſt buſie in putting them upon one another. Good God, how might true vital Chriſtianity at this day have flouriſht, if we would have beſtowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have *cheriſht*, than we *deſtroy* her. All parties pretend to be very careful of this *Vine*, are very buſie in ſetting traps for the *little Foxes*, all whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; and in the mean time take no care of the *wild Boar*, let

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that not only spoil her *branches*, but stock up her *roots*, suffer the most savage beastial vices to destroy both Power and Form of Godliness together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions, from our most important concerns. And as *Archimedes* is said to have been so vehemently intent upon a *Geometrical figure*, that he heard not of the taking of the City, till an Enemy gave him his *information* and *death* together: So do we so busie our selves in drawing our several *Schemes* of Religion (every of which will pretend to no less than *Demonstration*) that in the mean, that which alone is *true Religion*, is expos'd to the fury of the Enemy, sack'd, ruinated, and like the plough'd up *Jewish Sanctuary*, not one stone left upon another. Certainly most of the *questions* which at this day disturb Christendom, have *in respect of their matter* no Propriety toward the propagating good Life, but, *in reference to their way of managery*, all aptness to hinder it; how much were it then for our *Ease* as well as *profit*, to turn us into the plain road, where none of these Thorny difficulties will encumber us. Alas, why should the *Romanist* so sweat to maintain his *Purgatory flame*, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this world antedate those pains, when the same Industry bestowed here to *purifie himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, would substract the matter of that *Fire*, and leave little for that *furnace* to refine; which were doubtless a much securer way, even according to his *own principles*, than to trust to the uncertain devotion of *others*, to fetch him

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out when once deeply ingulph't: 'Tis ſurely much better to ſtarve that Fire, by ones own *innocence*, than to leave it to be extinguiſht by the Tears and Piety of *ſurviving friends*. Why ſhould the *Socinian* ſo eagerly contend for the poſſibility of keeping the Law, when *one example* would convince more than a *thouſand arguments*. Let him bend his ſtudy to make himſelf an inſtance of his own doctrine; and then though he do finally fail in proving his *Hypotheſis*, yet, if he do his utmoſt, he will not fail of a better *triumph*, than that which the Schools can give; and ſo will even from his error extract advantage, his very *ſtraying* will by a happy *Antiperiſtaſis*, lead him into the *way*. Why does the *Predeſtinarian* ſo adventerouſly climb into Heaven, to ranſack the celeſtial *Archives*, read Gods *hidden Decrees*, when with leſs labour he may ſecure an *Authentick tranſcript* within himſelf; let him according to Saint *Peters* advice, *add to his faith vertue, and to vertue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c. and that chain of vertues will ſtand him in much more ſtead, than if he could as infallibly (as ſome have confidently) demonſtrate every link of *Predeſtination*: 'Tis the aſſiduous *practice* of Duty will make his calling and election ſure; and unleſs he can confute that divine *Axiome*, that *without holineſs none ſhall ſee the Lord*; he cannot but confeſs he may more profitably buſie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in diſputing whether he can chuſe to be ſo or not. Or laſtly, why do we *Chriſtians of ſeveral perſwaſions*,

sions, so fiercely argue against the *salvability* of each other, as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Interest and our Wish, *that all should be damn'd, but those of our particular Sect*; when God knows not only every society, but every single person has enough to do, to *work out his own salvation,* which if we will take the *Apostles* word, is to be done *with fear and trembling, Phil.* 2. 12. A temper very widely distant from that of censuring and judging. And sure we should not think that *malefactor* more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who should leap from the *Bar* to the *Bench,* and there condemn the whole Goal but himself. 'Twas a sober and Christian *reply* of a late learned Gentleman, who being askt by one whether a *Papist* might be saved, answered, *you may be saved without knowing that.* And would we confine our cares and enquiries, to those things which concern that one great Interest, we might take *less pains,* and yet do *more work,* be less *busie-bodies,* but more *fruitful Christians,* and then sure 'tis time we ask our selves the *Wise mans* question, *Eccles.* 5. 16. *What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind*; and at last give over this unthriving diligence, and not so emulate the most stupid of Beasts, as to make our selves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

AND were this only *Issachars* lot, 'twere the less to be regretted, but also *Zabulon* herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the *pen of the Writer,* that have engrost *this error,* and will not suffer it to be a *Plebeian* one. None do

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ſo much this way miſ-employ the two vulgar talents of Time and Induſtry, as thoſe who have a third ſuperadded to them, that of Extraordinary Faculties and endowments which they do as prodigally laviſh as either of the former. The Beginners or Abettors of *contentions* have generally been Perſons of the moſt *acute refin'd wits* and *excellent learning*, which has enabled them for thoſe quirks and ſubtilties, of which groſſer underſtandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant: A ſtrange production that the *greateſt beauties* of Nature and Art, ſhould ingender the *fouleſt deformity* in Religion. Thus alas have *Satans* altars the pre-emption of *Gods*, the fatteſt Oblation brought to feed the fire of *contention*, whileſt that of *devotion* expires for want of Nouriſhment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of *Pagans* had made him ſo wantonly nice, that none but the choiceſt victimes would ſerve his turn; none but an *Andromeda* and an *Iphigenia*, Royal and Virgin ſacrifices propitiate his infernal Deities: but that among *Chriſtians* he ſhould ſtill have the *ſame Election*, have the richeſt treaſures of thoſe, who ſay they war againſt him, laid at his feet, have his choiceſt weapons out of his Enemies magazeen, is a riddle that can ſcarce be ſolved, but by concluding *Idolatry* has only chang'd its *form*, and that he ſits as ſecurely enſhrin'd in *mens paſſions* and animoſities, as ever he did in an *Idol Temple*; ſo that he ſeems rather to have loſt the *pomp*, than the *power* of Regiment. But admit, that he were not herein

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so immediately Gods rival, that these *speculative debates* had none of those adherencies, which do so directly gratifie him, yet still he is secur'd of gaining somewhat at rebound; for alas, when mens faculties are thus employed, what Weapons are there left for the defence of true *practick vertue*, and God knows, she needs them but too much: Mens *lusts* are grown subtile Disputants, so that the most improved *reason* may find work enough to manage the Contest; And surely would men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way, vice could not have got so strong a party. Men are ashamed to be *Proselytes* to a weak Arguer, as thinking they must part with their *reputation*, as well as their *sin*: and certainly nothing is a more general *discouragement* from Piety, than the *opinion of its votaries* not being Persons of Parts, and exalted Understandings; a Prejudice as old as the time of our *Saviour*, as may appear from *Jo.* 7. Would God our greatest *Rabbies* would sadly consider how much they have contributed to this scandal, while by laying out their parts on *Polemick niceties*, they have neglected the more weighty part of their business, & given too much Attestation to that scandalous Maxim, that *Ignorance is the mother of Devotion*: Certainly this is quite to mistake their *Commission*, which is not that of a *Herauld*, to proclaim War amongst men, but that of an *Embassador*, to reconcile them first to holiness, and by it to God: And doubtless *one soul* gain'd to Piety, would more promote their account, than *many thousands*

thouſands ſecur'd to a Sect or Party. We find how ſad the doom was of that Servant who wrapt up his Talent, but we have no cauſe to think it would have been at all eaſier, if he had melted the Talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmiſh with his fellows: Whether that be not the caſe of ſome who have receiv'd not the *one* Talent but the *five*, I leave it to be diſcuſſed between God and their own Conſciences; but in the *interim*, 'tis ſad to ſee how unhappily men engage their endeavours, which ſeems to repreſent the reverſe of *Eſay's Propheſie*, we having beat our ploughſhares into ſwords, and our pruning hooks into ſpears, all the Inſtruments of fertility and growth in *Grace*, into Engins of *War* and *diſcord*; and then it muſt needs be a moſt deplorable condition to which Chriſtianity is reduced; which ſeems in this to be under the ſame calamity, which her diſtreſt profeſſors ſuffer from the *Turkiſh* tyranny, whileſt her hopefulleſt and moſt pregnant Children, are like *Janizaries* and *Timariots* trained up to fight againſt her. And let none wonder that I call it fighting againſt her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally renounce her; for that Circumſtance only determines the War to be *inteſtine*, not *foreign*; and if our own ſad Experiences had not too much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to the univerſal vote of mankind, which of thoſe were the moſt deſtructive. Indeed were there no other Act of hoſtility diſcernable, but that which we have hitherto inſiſted on, the intercepting

cepting her supplies, the cutting off from her that time, industry and gifts, whereby she would be nourisht and supported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and consequently most grateful to that grand *Enemy* who as hath been shew'd, makes advantage of our Wranglings of Dissentions *with one another*, to reak his more inveterate Malice *on us all.*

CHAP. X.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from disputes, as they supplant Charity.

BUT alas, the mischief of these debates, can never be describ'd by bare *negatives*, there are multitudes of *positive* ills, that inseparably adhere to them, and those of so destructive a force, that if Christianity were *beleagred* and *famisht* by the former, she is *storm'd* and *batter'd* by these, and so is ascertain'd to sink under all the methods of ruine. In the front of these we may well rank those displacencies and animosities which are the product of our speculative differences, and which do indeed so naturally result from them, that 'tis not to be hoped so long as the *one* continues that the *other* will ever cease. For though in *practice* we often see a bewitching Sin dethrone the Reason, and make men act as if they had no such superior

principle to guide them, yet in matters of *Speculation* their *affections* are generally ſtrongly influenc'd by their *underſtandings*. We do not only approve, but love thoſe notions wherewith we are prepoſſeſt, which kindneſs as it propagates its ſelf to the *abettors* of the ſame Tenets, ſo alſo it inſinuates diſlikes to the *oppoſers*. And as that oppoſition advances, ſo the diſguſt does too, till at laſt the Scene ſhifts, and the *Perſons* are at a greater war than the *Opinions*. But we need not thus derive a proof from the *cauſes*, when the thing does too demonſtrably atteſt its ſelf by the *effects*; for what iſſues are there of the mortalleſt hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this fountain. *Humane nature* we know has but three waies of actuating its Paſſions; by *thought*, by *word*, and by *deeds*; and we may ſurely conclude the feud very bitter that employes all theſe Engins, as 'tis too viſible this does; for though the *former* of theſe be in their own nature inſcrutable, to all but omniſcience, yet the *two later* are, according to *Chriſts* own Rule of the *Tree by the fruits*, infallible *Criterions* of them; and thoſe make ſuch liberal diſcoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have eſpous'd a *party*, whether they have not with the firſt diſcriminating rudiments of their own Sect, imbib'd a ſecret *confus'd prejudice* to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of ſo mortified paſſions, as to have ſtopt there, and not advanc'd to a direct averſion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere ſcarce poſſible

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for so many of the *vulgar*, to be such *Bigots* in their several factions; for alas, their Intellects are generally too *gross*, to have any *cleer* apprehension of the Points they contend for; their Leaders only give them some *general confus'd notions*, just enough to excite their *displeasure* against all Dissenters, and then their *anger* must presently be call'd *zeal*, and instead of the more uneasie task of suppressing their passion, this expedient serves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, so ridiculous have some mens prepossessions of this kind been, that they would scarce allow those to be *entire men* whom they thought not *sound believers*, but have phancied I know not what *bodily* as well as *mental* Monstrosities in those they were pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; a piece of childish credulity which the emissaries of some factions have not disdain'd to make their advantage of. But these inward disgusts and rancours are but the first bound of this ball of contention, when this leven is once in the *heart*, it will quickly diffuse its self, and both *tongue* and *hands* will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that disputes in religion are managed with such virulency and bitterness, that one would think the Disputants had put off much of *Humanity*, before they come thus to treat of *Divinity*. The government of the Tongue is a piece of morality which sober nature dictates, which yet in this instance many even of our greatest Scholars seem totally to have unlearnt; For whether we consider the unseemly reproaches, or ri-

gid cenſures, wherewith almoſt all parties purſue their Antagoniſts, we have reaſon to ſay with S. *James, The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poyſon*: would God their *guilt* of this kind, did not ſo loudly proclaim its ſelf, as to ſuperſede the need of *proof*. 'Tis too obvious that the *Satyr* has uſurpt the chair, and *polemick Diſcourſes* are degenerated into *libels* and *invectives*, our Controvertiſts fall from *arguments* to *reproaches*, as if their Zeal lay more to blaſt their adverſaries *fame*, than confute his *error*; and were this only in perſonal extemporary debates, it might have the excuſe of an indeliberate paſſion. Indeed it were to be wiſht that all words of this ſort, might vaniſh in that breath that utters them; that as they reſemble the Wind in *fury* and *impetuouſneſs*, ſo they might do alſo in *tranſientneſs*, and *ſudden expiration*: But alas, a courſe is taken to immortalize them, they become *records*, and our moſt elaborate *controvertial writings*, like the Earth after the curſe, over-run with theſe briers and thorns, Sarcaſms, contumelies and invectives filling ſo many *Pages*, that were thoſe weeded out, many *volumes* would be reduced to a more *moderate bulk* as well as *temper*. Nor are our *cenſures* any thing more modeſt than our *reproaches*, every petty difference is mutually upbraided, to each party as a defection from the faith, ſo that we ſcarce know a milder *name* than Hereſie, nor *doom* than Damnation. And as if the viſible obliquities of errors would not afford us inditements enough againſt

againſt one another, there is a cloſer inſpection made, every *poſition* is ript up, and curiouſly diſſected, to ſee what *Embryo* is in its womb, what ſeeds there are of monſtrous productions, which though perhaps the native ſtrength of the Principle would never have *animated*, yet the preternatural heat of an Antagoniſt can quickly *hatch* them (like the *Chickens* at *grand-Cairo*) into life, and vigorous being: and if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) Inferences, ſome ſuch Imputation is faſtned upon a *Theſis*, then all who embrace that, are charg'd alſo with all this *ſpurious brood*, though they never ſo ſolemnly renounce and diſclaim them. A practice ſure very uncharitable, for ſuppoſe ſuch *conſequencies* never ſo regularly deduced from my *opinion*, yet ſo long as I ſeriouſly diſavow and deteſt them, I may indeed be thought *unwiſe* in not diſcerning the connexion, but ſure not *impious*. So that unleſs want of *Logick* be a *damning ſin*, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me *reprobate*: and I cannot think that God, whoſe rigor bends againſt the faults of our *wills*, rather than our *underſtandings*, and who at the laſt great aſſize will aſſume our own conſciences into the judicature upon us, will ever ſentence me for thoſe *deductions* how horrid ſoever which I never made mine, or that I ſhall ever find my ſelf in Hell for a *miſperſwaſion* which I never entertain'd. But there are ſome whoſe Cenſures are not ſo *artificial*, yet no leſs *ſevere*, who beg their *Poſtulata*, and taking it for granted that ſuch and

ſuch are the only ſanctified opinions, make them the *Shiboleth* by which to diſcriminate not only their *own* Friends, but *Gods* too, lock up heaven gates againſt any who bring not that Ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the moſt *overgrown Sinner* of their own Opinion, yet they pronounce it impoſſible to the *ſtricteſt piety* of a Diſſenter. And upon ſuch grounds as theſe do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never conſidering that whileſt we ſo briskly preſage *others* Damnation, we really prepare for our *own.* Alas, our eagerneſs to *heat the Furnace ſeven times hotter for all that bow not to our dictates,* does but expoſe us to the fate of *Nebuchadnezzars officers,* Dan. 3. to be our ſelves conſum'd in that flame, wherein we caſt them. 'Tis indeed to be wiſht we would ceaſe to invade Gods peculiar, by judging thoſe that muſt ſtand or fall to him: but if we will needs take his *office,* 'tis but equitable, we take his *rules* too; and in our *Wrath* remember *Mercy*: But God be bleſſed 'tis the Judgment of our *upright,* yet *gracious* Maſter that ſhall finally determine us; and not that of our paſſionate fellow-ſervants: If theſe were irreverſible, and the Key of the bottomleſs pit were in our *cuſtody,* we might give Satan *a writ of Eaſe,* diſcharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a *Lion,* but might ſtill lie in his *Den,* and we ſhould bring in *prey* enough to glut the Devourer: For could we *execute* all we *condemn,* we might ask the Diſciples queſtion,

Mat.

Mat. 19.25. *Who then can be saved?* But as these severe *censures*, are a present *violation of Charity*, so they tend to the perpetuating it by obstructing a return to that *unity of Judgment*, which might make up the very *original breach*: for while men reciprocally load each others opinions and persons with detestable imputations, if they really speak what they think, they do still more deeply impress upon themselves the prejudice to that which they accuse: (*hatred* as well as *love* gathering strength by being actuated): but if they do indeed not believe their own *charge*, yet having once made it, either upon Interest or Passion, 'tis not probable they will want *pride* to maintain it; and when we consider how ruling a *piece of carnality* that is, we can not wonder if it indispose men to *retractations*. I wish we had not too many, and too late instances of some whose weightiest *objection* against a cause, has been their own former *violence* against it. When men have once fastned the brand of Heresie, Prophaneness or Blasphemy upon an *opinion*, they think they cannot afterwards become its *Proselytes*, without either seeming to *assume* those Guilts, or at least that of having *falsly charg'd* them upon others: and the Horns of such a *Dilemma* do so gore their *reputation*, that it often tempts to salve that with the *wounding of conscience*, and perswades them rather to reject their *convictions*, than expose their *credits* And certainly were this the only ill consequent of our rigorous accusations, it would be enough to pre-

judice them as unfit Inſtruments in a Goſpel deſign; but though they ſuit not with that work to which they ſolemnly *pretend,* they are moſt accommodate to that they really *produce*: For if we examine in the third place, what *influence* theſe our eager conteſts have upon our *actions,* we ſhall find them fully proportionable to our *words.* And firſt negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own Sect: and others who do not ſo, yet ſhew ſo great partiality in diſpenſing them, as diſcovers the Name of *Chriſtian* is not half ſo charming, as that of their own *particular Faction.* Were Inſtances of this kind as *needful* as they are *numerous,* 'twere eaſie to give multitudes: but I think none that has liv'd in our late confuſions can have wanted occaſions of obſerving it in *others,* at leaſt, if not in *himſelf.* But alas, *omiſſions* are ſcarce worth our notice, when there are ſo many *poſitive Acts* of unkindneſs ſo viſible among us: They know little of *ancient* and leſs of *modern* Times, that are unacquainted with the *mutual perſecutions,* which almoſt all parties have alternately rais'd, one againſt another among Chriſtians: *Confiſcations* and *baniſhments, Gibbets* and *flames*; Weapons God knows much too carnal for a ſpiritual warfare, yet much more in uſe than thoſe S. *Paul* recommends to *Timothy, gentleneſs,* and *meek inſtructing of Oppoſers,* 2 Tim. 25, 26. And when 'tis conſider'd that thoſe Oppoſers too were Heathens, 'twill be more than a little ſtrange, that

Severity

Severity should be allowable to *Brethren*, which was interdicted against *Aliens*. Is it an easier crime to reject the *entire body* of that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of some *one branch* of it? nay, perhaps only of some *corollary* and *deduction* from it, which as far as it is humane may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my *assent* than it satisfies my *judgment*; yet this is generally the most that can be affirmed of our differences; For almost what Party is there which do not avowedly own all that *Faith* which constituted the first *Christians*; would God we did as uniformly embrace the Charity too; and then most of our disputes would be superseded, at least so calm'd, that there should be none of those destructive effects which they now produce: For alas, how many funeral piles has this prepostrous zeal kindled? So that what some said of *Draco*'s Laws may too justly be applied to our arguments, that they have been writ rather in *bloud* than *Ink*. But as Christ when he forewarn'd his disciples of the ensuing persecution, tels them not only they shall be kill'd, but they shall be put out of the Synagogue: So now as if Christians were æmulous of every branch of *Jewish* cruelty, we transcribe that part of the copy too, and either by causless excommunicating *others*, or separating *our selves*, we deny the benefit of *publick communion* to each other: And this is a greater severity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is against what we

we count *error,* than what we know to be vice; and by how much the concerns of the *Soul* are more eſtimable than thoſe of the *Body.* The inveterateneſs of thoſe Feuds which riſe from Opinion, may clearly be diſcovered in this inſtance; let a man have committed all the *outrages* which may render him unworthy to live, yet when we proſecute him to *death,* we willingly afford him all helps towards his *future ſtate,* and no man is ſo inhumane as to refuſe to pray, either *for* or *with* a Malefactor; yet ſome few *ſpeculative differences* are ſuch a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common Duty, *the worſhip of our God.* Certainly among all the accurſed iſſues of our *contention,* there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of *Schiſm* and *Separation,* and would men judge diſpaſſionately, more irrational neither: For doubtleſs were our caſe ſtated to any ſober Heathen, he would never be able to gueſs, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and neceſſity of *prayer,* confeſs the ſame God, have the ſame common wants in this world, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the ſame *form,* and in the ſame *place.* Alas, is it not enough to be at diſtance where we *differ,* but muſt we be ſo alſo where we *agree*? Is unity ſo dreadful to us, that we muſt act contradictions to eſcape it. Surely this is a *ſtranger faſcination* of the ſpirit of Diviſion, than that in the Goſpel *Demoniack,* which enabled him to break all bonds in ſunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of

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a *Saviour*, crying out, *What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us*? Who knows what a powerful Exorcism the united intercessions of the Christian world might have been; had we joyntly deprecated our quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our *tears* might have cemented those breaches which our *dissents* made, but our *separation* widens. I know the venerable names of the Sanctions of *Holy Church*, the hundred thirty seventh Canon of the Code of the universal Church, which says in expres terms, Ὅτι οὐ δεῖ αἱρετικοῖς ἢ σχισματικοῖς συνεύχεσθαι, *that we ought not to pray with Hereticks or Schismaticks*, and very many warm expressions of the *Fathers*, are producible in this case: But till we Excommunicate with the Tears and Sorrows, and publick concernment of the Primitive Christians, who refus'd all acts of kindness only out of love, and the most ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern, whose estrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the Example of those *happy Times*, we should have fear'd the *guilt of Schism* in our selves so much, as not to have lightly charg'd it upon others; we should have prayed for the *conversion* of Dissenters, not laid *Anathemas* upon them, and prayed for their *confusion*. St. *Paul* we see, *Heb.* 10. 25. reckons the *forsaking of Assemblies*, as a degree, at least preparative of *Apostasie*; and from his time throughout all the purer ages of the Church

Church the holy Fathers have generally branded it, as the higheſt impiety; and no marvel, for it is one of thoſe Gyant-like ſins, which not only oppreſſes *men,* but invades even *God himſelf.* 'Tis the mangling and aſſaſſinating *that body* to which Chriſt owns an *inſeparable connection*; the putting him to head ſcatter'd limbs, inſtead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute St. *Paul,* ſhew him 'tis poſſible that *Chriſt may be divided.* Good God, what ſhall we ſay when we ſee Heathen Souldiers eſtimate Chriſts *coat* higher than Chriſtians do his *body*! they thought the *one* too good to be parted, but we ceaſe not to tear and mangle the *other,* and which is yet more monſtrous, make it *a part of our Religion* to do ſo. We name our *Opinions* our *Faith,* and when under that Title we have enſhrin'd them, *we* make more barbarous Immolations than ever the moſt *ſavage Heathens* did. They ſacrificed ſome few objects of their Love, their *Children,* but we ſacrifice the very *affection,* and think our Zeal *lukewarm* till it have reduced our Charity to *aſhes.* And now if we compare theſe our *Diviſions, Wrath* and *Bitterneſs,* with thoſe fundamental, Goſpel precepts of *Unity, Love* and *Meekneſs,* we muſt ſurely ſay we have not there ſo learn'd Chriſt. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a Zeal to that Goſpel, whoſe very foundations we undermine. Peace is at once the *bleſſing* and *duty* of Chriſtians, and thoſe heats of *ſpeculative* Conteſts which violate it, will certainly never ſerve to make us either good or happy. And therefore

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till Charity ceaſe to be an Eſſential part of Chriſtianity (which certainly we muſt burn our Bibles ere we can ſuppoſe) we muſt conclude, that our Diſputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much ſoever they pretend to Preſerve, do indeed evacuate and deſtroy true, that is, *Practick* Chriſtianity.

CHAP. XI.

A ſurvey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they engage upon ill Arts and Scandalous Practices, to ſuſtain the eſpouſed Cauſe and Party.

AND yet ſo unhappily are many men miſtaken, that theſe *irregular heats* which thus waſte the vital ſpirits of Religion, are thought the moſt *Soveraign Cordials* to ſupport them. The higheſt *Paroxiſm* of this Feaver are deem'd the perfecteſt *Health.* Men eſteem the overflowing of their *Gall,* the exuberance of their *Zeal,* and then all the Promiſes to the *faithful combatant* in Chriſts camp, they confidently appropriate to that their ſo *eminent Grace*; though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd ſo, than *Pharaohs lean Kine* might be ſaid to be *fat,* becauſe they had devour'd thoſe that were ſo. In plain terms, men lay ſo great weight upon their being of right opinions, and their eagerneſs of abetting them, that they account that the

the *unum neceſſarium,* and think the propagating of thoſe ſo *important a ſervice* to God, as will juſtifie the uſe of the moſt *interdicted inſtruments,* legitimate the moſt *enormous Commiſſions,* that they can phancy contributive to that pious End: And moreover commute for the neglect of *Practick duties* in the general tract of their *lives.* I ſhall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of opinions, nay, the certainty that of many oppoſite, one only can be the right; and then to all ſuch as miſs, that their very groundwork fails them. I ſhall only confine my ſelf to the *malignant influence* this Perſwaſion has on *practice,* and in that reſpect I cannot but affirm it a moſt *pernicious deluſion,* which as it tends extremely to the enhanſing the bitterneſs of our conteſts, ſo it may juſtly be reckon'd among the worſt effects of them, and is a moſt *irrefragable proof* how much they obſtruct the vital *efficacy of Religion* in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themſelves, for we find ſuch Confidences as theſe frequently upbraided to the *Jews,* both by the *Prophets* and *Chriſt* himſelf, they thought their *Zeal* to the Temple and ritual obſervances, ſo invincibly meritorious, as no *Crime* could defeat, and that their *legal purifications* would render them acceptable in Gods Eyes, in ſpight of all their *Moral pollutions*: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many ſevere increpations of God do ſufficiently atteſt. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours, the things they ſo depended on were *parts,* though not

not the *whole* of their Duty; those *Ordinances*, though perhaps somewhat *adulterated* by *Rabbinical* mixtures, yet for the main were *instituted* by God himself, and that with a design of discriminating, and separating them from the rest of the world; and such peculiarities and priviledges as these, might have an aptness to excite that presumption: But alas, the case is otherwise with most of us; they are not the *Revelations* of Gods will, not the *Testament* of our dying Redeemer, but some *Codicils* and *Annexes* of our own we so earnestly abet. 'Tis not the *Text* (for then 'twere impossible for any that receiv'd the same Canon of Scripture to differ) but our *glosses* to which we pay such Reverence; and when on that account we *sever* our selves from those to whom the Commands of God, the Blood of our Saviour have most closely *united* and *cemented* us: We can yet make a shift to think that there is so much of Sacred in this, as shall not only render it highly rewardable, but also hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our *Jehu* march upon such an expedition, can turn all regrets of conscience (like *Forams* messengers) behind us. That this is so, none can doubt who observe with what boldness men rush upon the most *unchristian sins*, in pursuit of what they Phancy a *Christian cause*. Were it not for this *amulet*, how were it possible for any to think they may venture upon Perjury, Sacriledge, Murder, Regicide, any thing without impeachment to their *Saintship*; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other side,

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in being *remiſly wicked,* that to *ſlack* any thing of the utmoſt ſpeed, is *to do the work of the Lord negligently.* Yet that this has been a prevailing Perſwaſion, we have had too many, and too ſad inſtances; and God grant we may not find them ſo repeated, that our *ſenſe* may ſuperſede the *uſe* of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect, but thoſe who are otherwiſe at the wideſt diſtance unite in this Principle. They are not only *Phanaticks* that can ſay *grace* over the fouleſt *crimes,* and conſecrate them to the uſe of a *good cauſe*; if we examine the *Dypticks* either of Conclave or Conſiſtory, we ſhall find ſome Saints upon that account, who could never have been ſo upon any other. And when we conſider how often *Heaven* has been mortgaged to gain Auxiliaries from *Hell,* how men have been encouraged to the moſt *damning ſins,* by *promiſes* of being certainly ſaved; we muſt either think that a *Holy cauſe* is omnipotent enough to reverſe *Gods decrees,* to *ſave* whom he would *damn,* or elſe that this pretence is one of the moſt ruinous deceits, the moſt fatal Treachery to ſouls that ever *Satan* contriv'd, who though he do in all inſtances play the *Mountebank,* yet ſure never more than when on confidence of this *Antidote* he perſwades us thus to ſwallow down his *deadlieſt Poyſon.*

I MUST not here attempt to enumerate all the *unchriſtian practices,* that have on this ſcore been made, not only *lawful* but *meritorious*; yet there is one of ſo frequent uſe, that I muſt needs advert

advert unto it, and that is, those *calumnies* and *falshoods*, which are now become a piece of *Ecclesiastick* as well as *state policy*, and a great part of that offensive armour wherewith our controvertists assault one another. Indeed if we consider how many *forges* are daily going for these *Engines*, we shall have reason to think, all Parties have an high esteem of their *usefulness*. Of these Calumnies there are too many sorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed those, who permit themselves to use any, can be suppos'd to have no other *boundaries* than the advantage of their *cause*: And accordingly as that seems to exact, they lay their *Scene*; sometimes they traduce the persons of their opposers, and by raising prejudices against them, hope some of it will reflect upon their doctrine: did men generally know how to distinguish between *reports* and *certainties*, this *stratagem* would be as *unskilful* as it is *uningenuous*: But considering the vulgar temper, its not unaptly suited to it. This it seems was anciently understood, it being the old Greek advice, θαρροῦντας ἅπτεσθαι καὶ δάκνειν ταῖς διαβολαῖς, ὅτι κἂν τελέως πεύσῃ τὸ ἕλκος ὁ δεδηγμένος, ἡ οὐλὴ μένει τῆς διαβολῆς. *To calumniate stoutly, for that how perfectly soever the wound of reproach be heal'd, there will remain a scar; and though we wipe away with never so much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left some fulliage behind*: And accordingly this was the Expedient the *Pagans* us'd against the *Primitive Christians*, to put them thus in the skins of beasts, and shapes of monsters, and then worry them to

death. And this is the method ſtill, though heightned and improved, and our *Religion* has ſuffered infinitely more ſince we us'd it againſt *each other,* than when they manag'd it againſt the *whole community.* But beſides this *defamation* of Perſons, another branch of this black Art is the *depraving* of Writings, both in the ſenſe and very letter, and direct words; for the former of theſe, whoſoever obſerves the ſtrange perverſions, and affected miſtakes of mens meanings viſible in many of our *Polemick* diſcourſes, will ſure reſolve that a mans *intentions,* as well as his *words* and *actions* may be calumniated: Nor does the *letter* ſcape better, every period which threatens danger to the cauſe muſt be mutilated and diſmembred, and as *Sampſon* was by the *Philiſtines,* loſe its Hair and Eyes, and then be made ſport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this caſe take the *Jewiſh* reparation, an *Eye for an Eye,* &c. retaliate to the adverſary the foul play they receive. But ſome advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an Argument or Teſtimony uſeleſs to the *Enemy,* unleſs they draw it over to *themſelves,* make it *betray* the ſide it was to *maintain,* and as a Conqueror uſes to reſtore Arms to ſuch of the adverſe party, as will turn to his, ſo after they have by ſatisfactions ſecured themſelves of its aid, it ſhall then be made as potent as is poſſible, and with ſuch kind of *Renegado troops* as theſe, ſome *cauſes* have been much ſupported. Yet were this *violation* offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindicate

cate it, 'twere not so transcendently *ignoble*, but it most frequently falls upon those, who have made their beds in the dust; who have chang'd their own *Form*, and cannot secure their *Writings* from the same *fate*: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently *those*, whom we have all reason to suppose, and most of us profess to believe, *glorified Saints*; and this superadds a daring presumption to all other circumstances of the guilt, and heightens an injustice into Sacriledge. It has always been held the most detestable sort of *forgery* to counterfeit *Testaments*; though the *Testator* were of never so low a quality, or his *bequests* of never so mean a value: And shall it now pass for a piece of *commendable dexterity*, an art of manage to falsifie those *writings* by which the Fathers of the Church design'd to entail *truth* and *piety*, not *strife* and *faction* upon her. We know *Necromancy* has justly been reputed one of the most horrid forms of *Sorcery*, because it enforced *dead* men to speak what the *living* were inquisitive to hear. I leave it to be consider'd what this wants of that, besides the dreadful *ceremonies* of the Incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed this whole method of serving a *cause* by such *sinister means* is so utterly repugnant to the Principles even of ingenuous nature, that we can scarce cast a greater scandal upon an Opinion, than to shew it needs such Aids. 'Tis by *Historians* branded as an execrable fact in him, who to secure himself from a *neighbour*

Prince, call'd in the *Turk* into Chriſtendom: But ſure thoſe who to fortifie their ſide have brought in this Artifice of *calumniating* and *falſifying,* have done an Act no leſs *impious*; the conſtitution of Chriſtianity agreeing full as well with the *Alcoran* as with theſe *Piæ fraudes*; as ſome of them who perhaps mean the *fraud* more than the *Piety* are pleas'd to call them. Nay indeed, they accord not much better with *Philoſophy* than *Divinity,* every man knows the nature of contraries is to combate and expel, not to cheriſh and ſupport one another. How abſurd is it then for thoſe, who ſay they deſign to advance *truth,* to make *falſhood* their Inſtrument. I wiſh they would experiment to accommodate their ſecular concerns at the ſame rate, let them *cool* them in the Fire, *warm* them in the Froſt, and *feed* themſelves by perpetual Faſting, and when they find cauſe to commend the efficacy of that Method, they may with fairer pretence in this higher inſtance reconcile the feuds of Reaſon and of Nature, and make a *lye* the Evidence of *Truth.* In the interim, it may well paſs for *Sophiſtry* as well as *ſin*; and doubtleſs whatever advantages are hop'd for to private Sects and Parties by this art, Chriſtian Religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it: For when men ſhall compare the veracity of Heathens with our falſhoods; learn from *Hiſtorians,* that among the *Perſians,* ἄιχιστον τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισαι, *to lye was deem'd a fault of the greateſt turpitude,* and they therefore laid an ill Character upon perſons in debt, ὅτι ἀνάγκη τὸν ὀφείλοντα καὶ τὸ ψεύδος λέγειν, *becauſe*

becauſe he that is ſo muſt needs tell lyes: And when they ſhall ſee in the Laws of *Cingis* a barbarous *Tartar*, Lying made a *capital crime*, and yet among Chriſtian *Caſuiſts* made a *holy artifice*, they will be tempted to think our *end* as fictitious as our *way*; and that our Religion has little countenance from *truth*, which is thus fain to make *lyes* its Refuge. Thus unhappily do theſe Arrows revert, not only on *thoſe* who ſhoot them, but in the face of *Chriſtianity* its ſelf, which is defam'd, and traduced by thoſe *ſlanders*, we aim at our *private adverſaries*.

BUT beſides this *direct*, there are other more *oblique* Wayes of making *vice* ſubſervient to *Religion*, or to ſpeak more properly, of making *Religion* ſubſervient to *vice*; for ſome Zealots of ſeveral parties, who more regard the *numerouſneſs* than *purity* of their Profeſſors, diſcerning how much the ſenſual part of mankind ſtartle at the ſtrictneſs of Goſpel precepts, are induſtrious to take off that diſcouragement, not by convincing them of the real divine ſweetneſs and pleaſantneſs of them, but by debaſing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite: Yet here men proceed not all alike, ſome uſe Chriſts yoke, as *Hananiah* did that of *Jeremy*, break it quite off; others only eſſay to ſlacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the luſts of *libertine Proſelytes*: Of the firſt ſort are ſuch, as having made the *adherence* to their Party, the infallible mark of *Sanctification*, and that Sanctification of *Election*, do from thence proclaim to all who are ſo qualified

a general Jubile and manumiſſion from the bond even of *Chriſt*'s as well as *Moſes*'s Law: or if ſome of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm that *God ſees no ſin in his Elect,* or if he do, beholds them as a Father does the harmleſs falls of his Child, rather with *ſmiles* than *anger,* they make the *violations* of it ſo ſafe, that they are too ſure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the *difference* is meerly verbal.

OF the ſecond ſort are ſome, who by indulgent and partial gloſſes, ſeek to mollifie the ſeverity of Chriſts commands. That contrive for their Clients not the *means* of Obeying, but the *arts* of Eſcaping them. Like the *unjuſt Steward* teach their lords Debtors to *write fifty inſtead of a Hundred*; and decide Caſes of conſcience more according to the *intereſts* and *paſſions* of men, than the *will* of Chriſt. There are a generation of men of whoſe Dexterity in this faculty the world has taken ſo much notice that I need not name them, a ſort of eaſie *Caſuiſts* who ſeem to have erected a *Court of Equity* to relieve men againſt the *rigor* of *divine Law*; and there is little doubt but they ſhall find enough ready to make ſuch *appeals*: Men love to be Chriſtians as Cheap as they can, and therefore will cloſe with that party, which offers the eaſieſt terms: And then while theſe ſpiritual *Pioneers* do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the Beaſt as the Man, the *brutiſh ſenſual,* as well as *rational divine* Part of us, no wonder though Shoals of Converts

Converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be consider'd that all this while this is winning Proselytes to themselves not to God: the gaining them to a *Sect* not a *religion*; at least not to that pure religion, and undefiled which the grand Author of our Faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to us; for how much that suffers by this way of propugning private opinions, is more than enough apparent. Yet so ambitious are our prime leaders of such Trophies that in order to them some are said to ascend yet a step higher, and besides this general encouragement they give to mens lusts by *taking off* Restraints, do in some cases actually *promote* and *excite* them. For when they see a licentious person whose *acquest* they judge beneficial to their *cause*, they have artifices of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the *bridle*, but use the *spur* also, hoping that at the rebound it may conduce to their *End*. If any think it impossible it should do so, let them consider that among our various Opinions some there are which sell heaven much cheaper than others dare, that allow such *easie attonements* as the most *habituated sinner* need not despair of: and then the most infallible means to ascertain such to that side, is to make them too bad for any other. For when a man is resolute to keep his *sins* while he *lives*, and yet unwilling to relinquish all *hopes* when he *dies*, 'tis more than probable he will embrace that profession which bids fairest to the reconciling those so distant interests; and therefore the *greater malefactor* he is,

the more ſure he will be *to fly to the horns of this Altar*; the nearer ſinking, the apter to catch at theſe reeds; ſo that the Project is not *impolitick*, though God knows ſo *impious* that 'tis much fitter for the School of *Machiavil* than of *Chriſt*; and ſeems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Chriſtians, which *Julian* once as falſly as maliciouſly affixt upon the whole: that *their Church was an Aſylum and ſanctuary for the moſt flagitious offenders, and protected thoſe guilts to which no other religion allowed any Expiation.* 'Tis indeed ſo horrid that I cannot think there are many *conſciences* ſo cauteriz'd by this fiery *zeal* as to admit it, yet that ſome have done it, there is too much certainty, and therefore 'tis no improper inſtance in our preſent argument, for if mens *eagerneſs* to ſupport their ſeveral ſides, can tranſport them to ſuch *attempts* as theſe, 'tis abundant Evidence how much Chriſtianity loſes by theſe conteſts of under factions, which while they pretend to *guard*, do indeed *invade* her under her own Colours.

BUT beſides the faults men commit with this immediate *avowed aſpect* upon their religion, there are others which ſlily ſhroud themſelves under the *skirt* of its *mantle*: I mean thoſe *Sins* of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cauſe, yet when acted by a *Zealot* are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick *Piety*. Indeed men who make themſelves ſo much work about others *faith*, are ſeldom at leiſure to regulate their own *practice*, and ſo have no way

of

of stating their accounts with God, but by balancing the *excesses* of the one against the *defects* of the other: How such reckonings will pass the grand Audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine, but in the interim, it keeps them very cheerful and secure, teaches them a Receipt to retain all their *Sins*, and yet lose none of their *confidence*; so that when they have immerst themselves in all filthiness both of flesh and Spirit, they can trust their zeal to refine them from all that Dross. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other mens also, whose most brutish sensualities they can look on with perfect patience, nay even *Atheism* its self can have *fair Quarter*: They are not much discomposed to see men have *no religion*, 'tis only the having *one different* from their own that awakes their indignation; then like *Saul* when seiz'd on by the *evil spirit*, they cast about their Javelins, think no rigor too great on such a provocation, yet even here they have intervals, and the very same persons who are thus at odds upon a *religious*, can unite upon a *vicious* account. Those who mutually denounce *damnation* to each other, can with full accord combine in those *practices* which will ascertain it to them both, as if they so much fear'd to have their *predictions* defeated, that they would be each others *convoy* to the land of darkness. Those that will by no means meet at the *Church*, know not when to part at the *Tavern*, and though they will not joyntly partake of the *Cup of the Lord*, are yet very sociable at the *Cup*

of

of Devils; I mean thoſe exceſſive debauches, which are a moſt acceptable drink-offering to thoſe infernal ſpirits. Have we not ſeen many whoſe diſtant opinions have faſtned upon one another the brand of *Antichriſtianiſm*, who have yet like *Gog* and *Magog* joyn'd againſt the holy city: and thoſe who could never agree on the way of ſetting up *Chriſts Throne*, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the *Kings*. Thus alas do we juſtle one another out of the *narrow path* that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our Carier in the *broad way* of deſtruction. And doubtleſs this great unevenneſs, theſe ſpiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the ſame perſons; this *impetuous zeal*, and as *impetuous luſts* in the ſame breaſts could never be, did not men depend ſo confidently on the *one*, as to think it will commute, and ſatisfie for the *other*. But alas, how groundleſs a Preſumption this is, the whole tenor of the Goſpel does abundantly witneſs. In all that grand *Charter* where is there the leaſt Clauſe importing ſuch an *immunity*. I am ſure there are multitudes that aſſert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the Evangelical covenant is totally againſt it: That requiring an entire uniform Sanctity, and allowing no other *priviledge* to the *ſins* of the moſt knowing Profeſſors, but a *preheminence* in *puniſhment*, the being beaten with many *ſtripes*. And when 'tis conſider'd that the *end* of all religion is but the drawing us to a *conformity* with God, the impreſſing on us ſome Character of his eternal goodneſs and holineſs,

holineſs, 'twill be as abſurd as impious to believe that our *zeal* to any Religion can abſolve us from that *purity* which is the end and deſign of all. And while this is the way men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvail to find ſo *many* Chriſtians, and ſo *little* Chriſtianity in the world: for that is not to be eſtimated by the *number* of its profeſſors, but by their *obedience* to its Rules, and he that gives up his *name* to it and not his *heart*, will receive as little *advantage* by it, as he brings *honour* to it, and how little that is in reſpect of its internal Efficacy, is I preſume competently evidenced.

BUT that we may more throughly diſcern how univerſally deſtructive our *wranglings* are to it, in all its *concerns*, let us a little examine whether they do not endammage it even in reſpect of *outward profeſſion* alſo. This may ſeem a ſtrange Quære to thoſe who think their *deſputes* about Religion are to denominate them the great *confeſſors* of the Age: yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the *enquiry*, but to reſolve it in the *affirmative*. And if it prove ſo, 'twill infer but ſadly to thoſe who having laid the whole ſtreſs of their Hopes upon their zeal to advance their Faith, will be found to have *pull'd down* more than they have *built up*. Now Chriſtianity may in reſpect of profeſſion decay two waies, either in its *hopes*, or in its *poſſeſſion*, the one in relation to *Aliens*, the other to *Diſciples*. The firſt by hindring the acceſs of *new* Converts, the ſecond by ſtaggering or alienating

ting the *old,* and both theſe waies ſhe viſibly appears to ſuffer by our diviſions. And firſt if we conſult but our experience, if we truſt but our own obſervations, we cannot but confeſs that the Goſpel has long been at a great ſtand. That that *Sun* which at its firſt ariſing was like *David*'s, *Pſ.* 19. ſurrounded the world in a vigorous efficacious motion, is ſince become like *Joſhua*'s, *Joſh.* 10. 12. arreſted in its courſe: Nay like *Hezekiah*'s, gone backward, *Iſ.* 38. 8. *Mahumetiſm* (if not *Paganiſm*) having long taken up its ſeat in divers of the moſt flouriſhing Apoſtolick plantations. A ſad change, that from the daily and numerous acceſſion of the firſt times, it ſhould now become a kind of *Prodigy,* a piece of *news,* ſcarce heard in an Age, that one ſingle *Proſelyte* is gain'd to the *Church,* yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much leſs apparent that our diſſentions have in a great degree contributed to it. For firſt, as to the *extirpation* of the Eaſtern Churches, he that ſhall examine the records of thoſe times, will have cauſe to ſay their Janglings and Diviſions were not only in a *moral* or *divine,* but even in a *proper natural ſenſe,* the Inſtruments of it. The *Turk* only coming in at thoſe breaches which themſelves had made, nor had their *Candleſtick* probably been removed, had they not firſt abus'd its *light,* to the ſetting themſelves in *Combuſtion.* That the ſame *cauſe* has not yet had the ſame *effect* among us, is owing not to its *unaptneſs* to produce it, but to the admirable *patience* and *mercy* of God, who yet withholds that

that fatal Judgment, which we do our parts to pull upon our ſelves; our mutual violences againſt one another herein unhappily combining and making one united force againſt us all. But though the *divine goodneſs* have hitherto ſo countermined our *treachery* to our ſelves, as not to ſuffer us to enjoy that ſtate of darkneſs we have ſo courted, yet certainly our *contentions* are extremely acceſſary to the continuing it upon others, our many *new* and *wandring lights*, however they fail of having that Property of the *Pillar of fire*, Ex. 14. of illuminating and conducting the *Iſraelites*, yet too much anſwer its other, in becoming *cloud* and *darkneſs* to the *Ægyptians*; there being ſcarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of righteouſneſs from the Heathen world, every of thoſe *little encloſures* our Factions have made in the Church, becoming a *great partition wall* to keep others out of it. This may be made evident in ſeveral reſpects. As firſt, in relation to thoſe many *moral obliquities* in which our eager diſputes do (as hath already been ſhewed) betray us, which cannot but give ſo much *ſcandal* to any conſidering man, that we can ſcarce hope any can turn to us as to a better Religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquiſh all; to obliterate thoſe *native impreſſions* of Piety and Honeſty they brought with them into the world, ſo that if we expect any *Proſelytes* it muſt be only ſuch as would live *worſe* than meer *nature* allows them.

BUT

BUT this though as important a conſideration as can well be, I ſhall not here inſiſt on, having in the ſecond Section given ſome inſtances how apt our *Morality* is to defame our *Divinity*, and confirm men in Oppoſition to it. But though this be a *great*, yet 'tis not the *only* means by which our Diſſentions hinder the progreſs of the Goſpel, for they do not only make *infidels* leſs inclinable to receive it, but *us* to propagate it. Thoſe do ſo buſie and engroſs us, that there is neither leiſure nor heart left for this. Our *activeſt ſpirits* are ſo engaged at home in aſſerting their *private quarrels*, that all ſuch *foreign deſigns* are forgot. For as in *Civil*, ſo in *Eccleſiaſtical* concerns, every one is more induſtrious to advance his *peculiar* intereſt than that of the *community*, accordingly we find innumerable promulgers of every new Opinion. No *Sect* wants its *Apoſtles* to propagate and diffuſe it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main *Root* of Chriſtian Religion, which they have for theſe little *Twigs* and *Offeſets* which they have planted in their own Gardens; how many ages muſt we look back to find a man that has made it his buſineſs to convert *Infidels* to the Faith. 'Tis true indeed there are ſome very magnificent relations of *modern attempts* this way, of great induſtry ſome have us'd to bring the moſt ſavage nations to the obedience of Chriſt: but if we examine 'twill be obvious, the main deſign was to ſubject them to themſelves. 'Twas not ſo much their *Heatheniſm* as their *territories* they invaded,

and

and such *Apostles* as these are ill qualified to make S. *Paul's* profession, 2 Cor. 12. 16. *I seek not yours but you.* And the success of such Essays have been answerable to the motive; they have won *riches* but not *Souls*. The *Gospel* in one hand and a *sword* in the other has made many *slaves*, but I fear few *Christians*. Indeed, what encouragement had those poor creatures to receive a Religion from their Oppressors? why should they think that those who tortured and kill'd their *bodies*, were really concern'd to save their *Souls*? or that those who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better? And while the *felicities* of another world were recommended to them only by *such*, as had deprived them of all in *this*, we cannot wonder at their *little appetite* to embrace them; or to find the oppress *Indians* protest against that heaven where the *Spaniards* are to be their cohabitants. In short, this is sure such a method of *Evangelizing*, as too widely differs from that which first planted the *Church*, to be likely to advance its *growth*: so that notwithstanding all pretences of this kind, we may resume our assertion, and conclude that our *intestine discords* (perhaps not those alone) have diverted the *Zeal* of this more Christian undertaking, and left a great part of the world under that invincible Ignorance S. *Paul* mentions, Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher:*

preacher: and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their Excuse than our own.

THERE is yet another way by which our *divisions* impede their *conversion*, and that is by giving them *prejudice* to that Doctrine about which our selves cannot agree. 'Tis an universal Maxim that *truth is alwaies consonant to its self*; and therefore where they see so little *unity* they have too much *temptation* to doubt of Truth. He that wandring should meet a Company that offer to conduct him to his journeys end, might reasonably incline to deliver himself up to their *guidance*; but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one Disputing for this, and another for that, and every one protesting against all but his own; he would sure retract his *confidence*, and think they offer'd him only more variety of mistakes, resolve it as safe to trust himself to his *own* Errors as *other mens*. And this alas seems to be too exact a parallel of the present case; we Christians do so mutually damn one another, that a poor *Turk* or *Heathen* will think, he rather *multiplies* than *ends* his Danger by associating himself with us; for there being so many parties, which soever he joyns himself to, there will be abundant odds against him; so that if he could be secur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out, would be a very disheartning consideration. Besides men love in *transactions* of great Importance to have as *many*, and as *credible Vouchers* as may be, and upon that

that score 'twill sure be but a cold inducement, to any to turn *Christian* to foresee, that when he has done so, he shall be *disown'd* by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the *Church*, he shall be met with almost as many *Anathemas*, as when he was an *Infidel*. Nay, I scarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the *Church*, or rather into a *Conventicle*, or *particular Congregation*, our Schisms and Separations having hardly left a possibility of *external communion* with the *universal Church*, since the Communicating with one part of it, does infallibly Excommunicate from another. Thus have we placed our *flaming Sword* (though God knows no *Cherubim*) at the gate of our Paradise, and when God calls all men to the *waters of life*, our Contentions have made them like *those of Marah*, so bitter and unpleasant, as deters and averts men from them: Which as it is in the highest degree injurious to them, so is it contumelious to *him*, whose invitations are by this means frustrated; 'tis in some degree the evacuating one of the main *purposes* of Christs coming into the World, which was to *call men out of darkness into his marvellous light*, and as *He* was thus sent by his Father, so also were the *Apostles* solemnly commissionated by him to preach to the Gentile world, who with indefatigable industry and resolute sufferings pursued the *charge*; and sure this is competent evidence, that the design was of the greatest and most weighty importance, and such as can never be out-dated,

till there cease to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us measure the guilt of obstructing it, which if we would impartially do, I assure my self the most *passionate Bigot* of any Party must confess, that it infinitely out-weighs all the Piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his *peculiar* Church gains not so much as the *Catholick* loses: And that how confidently soever he have Canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worst sort of Heathens, and serve to keep out the better. Yet besides the mischief they do in relation to those that are *without*, they are extremely pernicious to those that are *within*, and that not only to some *one Sect*, but like an *universal poyson*, that is equally deadly to the most contrary complections, they operate on the most distant ranks of Professors, the *tender* and the *obdurate*, the *scrupulous* and the *profane*. And first for the tender tremulous Christian, 'tis easie to discern how much he must be distracted and amaz'd by them, for while he hears each Sect thunder out *Damnation* against each other, he cannot but be startled at the *danger* of adhering to the *wrong*, and though that may a while excite his diligence to discover the *right*, yet when he comes to that inquisition, he will meet with so many *Polemick intricacies* to entangle him, that after many turns, first to one side, and then to another, he will be apt to think the only *clue* to extricate him out of this *labyrinth* of many Religions, *is to abandon all.* Nor is this *meer Speculation* and *Conjecture*, God knows we have had successively through

through the whole round of Error too many *practick experiments* of it. Several persons there have been, whose Zeal to find out *truth* by an unhappy rule of *False*, directed them to allow of *every Error*: While like *sick men*, who desire to die good-cheap, they put themselves into the hands of any *Empirick*; follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of Truth, till Superstition ends in Profanation, *Godlineß* proves *Atheism*, and by having been of *many Sects*, at last have *no Religion*. And surely this is a most unhappy Effect of our discords, thus to be *stumbling-blocks* in our brothers way, and when we remember the woes pronounc'd against those that shall Scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be strange how men can think to approve their *Christianity*, by the ruine of their Brothers, or secure themselves of *Heaven* by keeping Others thence: For though Christ tells his Disciples there should be some that should think it a *service* to God *to kill their Bodies*, yet to phancy the *destroying of Souls* so too; is a Deception of which we have neither *record* nor *prediction* in Holy Writ, and is a superfætation of the spirits of delusion, peculiar to those who have placed their own sanctity in these religious wranglings, which serve to destroy it in other men. And as they thus serve on the one side to shipwrack the *faith* of these weak unstable Souls; so do they on the other advance the *impiety* of the daring sinner; for as they are Temptation to the *one*, so are they Pretence and Excuse to the *other* to bid defiance to all Religion. He

whoſe diſſolute *affections* have ſo long been courting his *underſtanding* to turn Atheiſt, will ſure not loſe the advantage of ſo plauſible an Argument as our *diviſions* afford him; and ſince his *luſts* engage him in an irreconcilable War againſt the *practick part* of Piety, he will moſt gladly embrace this occaſion of quarrel againſt the *Theory* alſo: So making himſelf entire, and extinguiſhing thoſe uneaſie regrets and miſgivings ariſing from the repugnancy of his *life* to his *belief*. It were not hard to give a *compendium* of theſe mens *Logick*, and draw out thoſe *Schemes* of Diſcourſe, by which from our *differences* in Religion they infer the *diſcarding* of all. But I fear theſe are already too well known, and where they are not, I ſhould be loth to be any mans Inſtructor. This is I am ſure too palpable, that how *fallacious* ſoever theſe Reaſonings are, they have been very *operative*, as appears by the number of thoſe *avowed Atheiſts* among us, who placing themſelves *in the ſeat of the ſcorner*, give themſelves much pleaſing Divertiſement by *deriding* our eager *ſcuffles* about that which they think nothing. If any man thinks that the *Church* is no loſer by the defection of ſuch *Libertines*, I muſt be allowed to diſſent from him: For firſt, there are examples of the moſt vicious Perſons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Chriſtian *belief*, that lays ſuch undeniable obligations to good *life*, that whenever they reſume their *reaſon*, they muſt take up *vertue* alſo with it; ſo that there is an equal poſſibility of their being *good*, that there is

is of their being *rational*: But when all hope and fear of a future estate is disclaim'd, when those cords are broken which should pull them up from the Dungeon, then, and not before is their state visibly desperate. But besides this possibility of *recovering them*, the danger of *losing others* is to be considered. Bold *Atheism* is like a raging *Pestilence*, which taints the very *Air*, so that those impious *discourſings* which are the *effects* of some mens Vices, may be the *cause* of others; and we too often see that those who ascended themselves *by degrees*, do *in an instant* advance their *Proselytes* to the height of Irreligion, as appears by the strange proficiency of some, whose Years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwise than *per Saltum*. And sure this spreading Contagion has been so destructive to the Church, that it were to be wisht, the meer titular Christians had rather remain'd such, than thus to have averted others from being so much.

AND now if all these scandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exasperating the *bad*, the corrupting the *innocent*, and the decay of Christian *profession* consequent to both be *formidable Evils*, we know where to charge the *guilt*. Our *contentions* must be arraigned as *accessaries*, if not *principals* in the case: And then sure it will befit our angry Zealots to consider, whether this be the way of *advancing Gods truth, or what account they will give to the Lord of the Vineyard*, who while they pretend to dress and prune the *branches*, do thus debilitate and destroy the *roots*.

Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretenſions, for all thoſe ſeveral Religions which they ſo tenderly cheriſh, have no *proper root* of their own, but like Excreſcencies, ſpring out of the *main ſtock* of Chriſtianity, live by its juice and moiſture, and conſequently, can never hope to ſurvive it. And then certainly there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to expreſs their kindneſs to the *one*, by ways that are ſo ruinous to the *other*. 'Tis as if a *Paſſenger* in a Ship ſhould to fortifie his *private Cabin*, tear up the *planks* and expoſe the whole Veſſel to ſinking: Yet thus prepoſterouſly do many of our *chief Pilots* apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very *delightful proſpect* to the grand Enemy of Souls, to ſee us thus buſily promote his *intereſt*, lay *ſnares* for our ſelves, and by our own *folly* do that which all his *ſubtilties* could never compaſs. Nor can we think but he will be as *officious* to us as is poſſible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our *Turrets*, whilſt he ſees we pluck out *ſtones* from the *foundation* to build them with; nor ſhall we ever want *new models* of Churches, ſo long as they thus help to deſtroy the *old*; and how aptly they are fitted for that Purpoſe, needs (I ſuppoſe) no farther Demonſtration.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

A survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes, in reference to Civil Peace.

AND now sure we cannot but conclude our *Contentions* highly injurious to *Christianity*, that thus assault it both in the *Practick* and *Theory*: And indeed how fierce soever our quarrels are with one another, the heaviest blows are sure to fall on that, which as in its constitution is of the most Pacifick temper imaginable, so it has the common fate of reconcilers to suffer from all parties. But *Godliness having the promise as well of this life as of that which is to come*, it often happens that there is such a consent between our *spiritual* and *secular* Concerns, that the Mischiefs that oppress the *one* do reflect on the *other*: And indeed Religion when entire and united, is one of the best bonds of *Civil* as well as *Ecclesiastical* Peace,(as even those attest, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a useful state Engine;) from whence 'tis consequent, that the *distractions* and *divisions* in that must have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect *communities* with Discord, Tumult and Disorders. And this is an *effect* with which I think not unfit to bring up the *rear* of the foregoing Mischiefs, it being not so purely Secular as not to

ſuit our preſent ſubject; for *outward order* and *unity* can never be ſo innocently diſturb'd, but that *Chriſtianity* muſt be wounded in it alſo: And beſides, it may perhaps obtain more conſideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themſelves the moſt concern'd; for though there be many that can look on the ruine both of Chriſtian practice and profeſſion, with *Gallio*'s indifference, *Acts* 18. 17. and care for none of thoſe things, yet when the ſiege draws cloſer, when they find themſelves begirt in their worldly intereſts, and that the ſame Deluge that overwhelms *Churches,* may bear down *Palaces* alſo, perhaps they may think the matter not ſo contemptible. And firſt, as to the truth of the obſervation the *World* has too long groaned under the *Experiment* to need farther proof. That *bitterneſs* which firſt tainted the *waters of the Sanctuary,* hath from thence diffus'd its ſelf into our *common ſtreams,* and like the *Ægyptian Plague,* left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon Families, Neighbourhoods, Kingdoms, any the *leaſt,* or any the *greateſt* Societies, we find the miſerable *Trophies* of our *holy Wars,* in Factions and Confuſions; I wiſh I could not ſay Rapine and Blood alſo. For the *firſt* of theſe, the domeſtick Jarrs caus'd by different Opinions, the *Inſtances* are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our *own age* and *nation* affords us. How many Servants have on this ſcore been at defiance with their Maſters? Children with their Parents? nay, Wives with their Husbands?

Husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in *mistaken Zeal*, that it dissolves the *closest bonds*, violates all *obligations* natural or civil, while under pretence of service to God, like the *Pharisees* Corban, it evacuates all duty to man; and this has made such ruptures and divisions in Families, that that delightful prospect the *Psalmist* so much commends, that of *Brethrens dwelling together in unity*, *Psal.* 133. is scarce any where to be met with; but instead of that, such rancor and bitterness, treachery and malice, as if men either mistook Christs *prediction*, *Luke* 12. 52. for a *precept*, or at least were willing to advance his *Prophetick* Office upon the ruine of his *Kingly*, and to verifie his *præsage* by breaking his *command*. And as the Oeconomical order and peace is thus disturb'd, so if he that misses quiet *at home* should seek for it *abroad*, he will soon find himself disappointed, and discern that as the *societies* grow greater, so do the *disorders* also, and that private Strifes do as much combine to make *parties* and *factions*, as Families do to make *Cities* and *Corporations*. By this means that mutual communication by which the Members of civil bodies should not only benefit one another, but secure the whole is interrupted, and men live not as *neighbours* but *spies*, always upon designs of Entrapping and Ensnaring, for while they look on one another as *enemies to God*, they think that rescinds all obligations of *friendship among themselves*, and when Religion bears the *Standard*, the *War* will be concluded necessary and honourable.

able. But though it be ſo in *imagination only*, 'tis ſure there are ſome, who make it *really profitable*; for as in moſt *Camps*, the greater Number are attracted rather by hope of *booty* than concern for the *cauſe*; ſo here, many men *liſt* themſelves under one Party, that they may have pretence to *prey* upon the reſt. And to that End ſeveral very commodious *Axioms* have been taken up. As that *no faith is to be kept with Hereticks*; that *Dominion is founded in Grace*, &c. by ſuch meaſures as theſe the goods of the *Ægyptians* become lawful prizes to any, that pleaſe to call themſelves *Iſraelites*; and indeed *Jews* they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly uſe it of *unjuſt* and *cruel extortioner*: But ſure not ſuch *Iſraelites* as Chriſt defines *Nathaniel*, *Jo.* 1. 47. *without guile*: For having thus conſecrated their frauds, and found an expedient of ſerving *God* and *Mammon* together, there is no piece of *deceit* either too big, or too little for them; no *tranſaction* ſo important, which can oblige their *fidelity*; none ſo trivial as to diſcourage their *rapine*: Opportunity is the only meaſure and rule of their attempts, by this means no *Obligation* of Contract, no *Laws* of Commerce can eſcape unviolated, every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that *zeal* which makes men *Saints* in the Church or Conventicle, can make them *Thieves* in the Shop or Market. Thus is Piety made an Engine of rapine, and by theſe *religious riots*, all *boundaries* wherewith Laws or Equity have fenc'd mens diſtinct *properties*, are thrown down: And ſure this

this is a most carnal consequent of our spiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that state of common Hostility, which some have phancied to be the *Original condition* of mankind: For it renders commerce so dangerous, that men may within a while think it safer to trust their own *strengths*, than to the shelter of those *Laws* and *Civil compacts*, which they see so avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the Injury be immediately done to *private* persons, it becomes a *publick* mischief: Yet alas, these are but the more moderate *effects* of our Dissentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of publick ruine; the *defrauding* or *undermining* of a few Neighbours, are *petty prizes* for those that think they have the sole right to the Creature, and are those *Meek* who are to *inherit the Earth*, and every such acquest only serves to flesh them for a farther chase. The *spoils* of a broken Kingdom will afford something worth the *scrambling* for: And nothing more fit to *break it* than a pretence of Religion, which like the *stone* that smote *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, has shivered the most goodly Monarchies. And accordingly, we see no *Engine* is more constantly us'd by men of Seditious spirits, to disturb and subvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing so advantageously fitted for the purpose. For should such persons unmask their *design*, and shew it in its *native ugliness*, should they avow the shaking of a *Kingdom* meerly to establish themselves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding

moulding of a Government only that they might ſhape their own ſhares in it, 'twere impoſſible they ſhould find any abettors; for though the *multitude* are always in preparation for *change*, yet 'tis not on Intuition of benefit to ſome *private perſons*, but of ſomewhat wherein *themſelves* may partake: Nor is even the madneſs of the people mad enough, to expoſe all their *own intereſt*, and moſt important concerns only to promote *thoſe of others*. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for ſuch deſigners to ſuborn the *publick intereſt* to countenance and cover their *private*; to cry up *Diana* to ſecure their own *gain*, and to make the ſeduced *Populacy* like the *Jackcal* to the *Lion*, hunt that prey which themſelves mean to devour. And of all thoſe artifices by which ſuch *Incendiaries* have ſet Kingdoms in a *flame*, none has been more univerſally ſucceſful than the *prætext* of Religion, which is thought ſo *creditable a cauſe* to engage in, as can convert the *infamous titles* of Rebel and Traitor into thoſe of Patriot and Saint, and conſequently, take off all diſcouragement ariſing from the diſreputation of ſuch an enterprize: And no leſs potent is it in ſolving the ſcruples of its unlawfulneſs; for by a dexterous anticipation, it makes Conſcience a *party*, that it may exclude it from being *judge*, and by that one fallacy of ſuppoſing *Religion* to be *a juſt ground of quarrel*, make way for all the wild conſequences deducible from that *falſe principle*: And indeed where that is throughly faſtned, the *miſchiefs* are not only *great* but *incurable*, & yet the more

more so by how much the person is more zealous. For alas, what will it avail to tell such a man, 'tis a sin to *fight against his King*: when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to *fight for his God*: That he contracts a *heinous guilt* in violating the *peace* of the Church, when he with as great confidence believes, he *merits* in propagating its *truth*. That he is accountable for the *bloud* of his Brethren; when he thinks he has like the *Levites*, Ex. 32. consecrated himself in it, and offer'd it an acceptable *sacrifice* to God. Thus unhappily are these men fortified in their *sin*, by presuming it their *Vertue*, and while the *furious zeal* of such is made subservient to the *wicked craft* of others, 'tis a most *apt instrument* of publick Mischief, there being no attempt so desperate, which such may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd as *Hanibal* is said to have done those Oxen, whose *horns* he first fired, and then sent them to disturb the *Roman* camp: These *men* as those *beasts* are found very useful for the molesting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themselves, is the *smart* of their own *flames*. Few of those who thus in the simplicity of their heart follow an *Absolom* or a *Sheba*, that do not either miscarry together with the *design*, or else live to discern how much their *credulity* was abused; and that both *religion* (however pretended) and *those* that fought for it, were only made *properties* to promote the *lusts of those* who despised both. But 'tis unnecessary to insist farther on the *effects* of such religious Fury, of which *we of this Nation* have

have had ſo many and ſo *coſtly evidences,* as far tranſcend the moſt *tragical deſcriptions.* God grant we may never have other than our *paſt experiences* to meaſure them by: But certainly there is little reaſon to be ſecure, ſo long as the *root* of them, our *ſpeculative differences* daily encreaſe; for unleſs we could ſuppoſe an Age of ſuch innocence, that there ſhould be none who would *take* any undue Advantages, 'tis ſure there will be enough *given*: And indeed when we reflect upon our paſt Diſtractions, and conſider how trivial the *matter* of moſt of thoſe Debates was, whoſe *manner* has been ſo cruelly ſolemn; how our ſlighteſt *problemes* have been writ in *bloud,* that many Thouſands have been made *naked* to keep the *Surplice off* a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our *Churches* in diſpleaſure at the *windows,* when I ſay theſe and a Thouſand the like are conſidered, we muſt conclude that there can never *want* Occaſion to them that (in the *Apoſtles* Phraſe) *deſire* Occaſion. The *lighteſt diſtempers* in the Chuch being *contagious,* and moſt apt (when fomented by ambitious deſigners) to beget an *univerſal Plague* in the Common-wealth. And now who can without horror conſider theſe miſerably perverted *effects* of Chriſtian Religion, that *that* which was deſign'd the moſt *inviolable bond of unity,* ſhould like thoſe curles of entangled ſnakes with which *Erinnys* is ſaid to have infuriated *Athemas* and *Ino,* become the *fatal incendiary of the mortalleſt hatred.* That *that Oeconomy* which was meant to *regulate,* ſhould be the Inſtrument of *confounding* and *embroyling* the World; and

a *Gospel of Peace* should thus be made the *Incentive to war,* and create fiercer quarrels than those it was to have compos'd. To *turn the Grace of God into wantonness,* is justly branded as a *great* Crime, but sure to turn it *into malice* is yet a *greater.* And though every sin offers violence to our religion, yet *this* is of all others the most *barbarous,* thus to make it Assassinate its self, become a kind of *Felo de se,* and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the case, is I presume sufficiently evident in all the *foregoing instances,* which as they are most obviously the *effect* of our eager Disputes, so are they no less visibly *destructive* to Christianity in all its interests, leaves it neither *root* nor *branch,* neither *inward* Vigor, nor *outward* Luster; so at once rendring it both unfertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hostile Severity against *Moab,* to *fill the land with stones, thereby to render it barren,* 2 King. 3. 25. The slingers went about, and smote it: but what *that* suffered from *profest Enemies,* the *Church* daily sustains from those that call themselves her best *friends.* Our *Benjamites* are so in love with their skill of slingling to a hairs breadth, their nice Criticisms, Distinctions, and Subtilties, have cast abroad so many *stones of contention,* that the Church is become perfect *quarry,* utterly *steril* and *unfruitful,* as to all those good works for the production whereof, she was so peculiarly fenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if *barrenness* were the worst, and that she had not on the other side acquir'd an unhappy

degenerous

degenerous fertility: But what a numerous and accurſed Iſſue ſpring from this unpeaceable temper, the foregoing conſiderations do too ſadly demonſtrate; and I doubt not every attentive Obſerver will be able to add *more* (though not *truer*) Inſtances; and beſides to diſcern that this *ſpurious brood* like that of *Hagar* is grown ſo wantonly inſolent as to deſpiſe the *right heir* of the Promiſe. The true *Goſpel Graces* of Meekneſs, Peaceableneſs and univerſal Charity are accounted *Earthy phlegmatick qualities*, we diſclaim that *Holy Ghoſt* which deſcends in the appearance of the *Dove*, nay or in *fire* either, unleſs it be like that of *Elijah*, to conſume all that diſguſt us. Nor do we meaſure our *Religion* ſo much, by the oppoſition it makes to our *luſts*, as to thoſe whom we firſt make, and then call our *enemies*. Thus miſerably have we changed the Scene, and by *calling evil good, and good evil*, have accumulated injuries upon our oppreſſed Chriſtianity, not only rob'd it of its *rule*, but of its *reputation* alſo. And do we daily thus ſee *Iſhmael* mocking *Iſaac*, and ſhall we not think it time to caſt out the Bond-woman and her Son? ſhall we for ever cheriſh this generation of *Vipers* to tear out the *bowels* of our common Mother? I pray God the Queſtion have not as much of *præſage* as *expoſtulation*. For if we conſider the preſent ſtate of things, how our *contentions* plead not only *right* but *preſcription*, there ſeems not much hope of diſpoſſeſſing them, and yet leſs, when 'tis remembred, how they have entwiſted themſelves,

not

not only with the *passions*, but *interests* of men; two such *potent Abettors* as will buoy up the most *forlorn cause*. The truth is, there are many *subterraneous springs* which feed *this Ocean*, and though religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have seen the *effects* of our debates very *disconsonant* to such a Profession; so if we examine the *originals* and *causes*, we shall find them for the most part as *widely distant*. It may not be amiss to take a short view of some of them; for though I cannot hope the *discovery* of the Causes will contribute to the *general cure*, yet perhaps it may prove *Antidote* to some particular persons, who will be the less apt to admire the verdure of the *leaves* (the flourishing appearances of *zeal* and *piety*) when they find both *fruit* and *root* of so poisonous a quality.

CHAP. XIII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; and first, Pride.

AND in this inquest we find Pride already arraigned to our hands, by the wisest of Men, Prov. 13.10. *only by pride cometh contention.* It is indeed a most prolifick vice, and there are few *sins* to which it is not either a *parent* or *nurse*: but there is scarce any

which does more betray its immediate descent from it than this of *strife* and *debate*, which has so many of the *lineaments* and *features* of the deform'd Mother, as sufficiently attest its *extraction*. And as this is true of *all* strifes in general, so particularly of *those* whereof we now treat: for Pride being its self an internal sin, it has such a neighbourhood with all the notions and speculations of the mind, that it easily makes impressions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the Sacredness of divine things is not *Amulet* enough against its *Charms*, when we remember that the *first act* of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even *at God* himself; and as it took up its first seat in a spiritual substance, so has it ever since, never acted more *naturally*, and therefore more *vigorously* than about spiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many costly Experiments, for if we trace the Catalogues of Heresies from *Simon Magus* his daies down to our own, we shall find Pride a *principal Actor* in every *Scene*, though perhaps in *various dresses*. For though Pride be alwaies in the general an affectation of some transcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to the several estimates men make of excellencies. So that the *propugners* of new Opinions, though they have this *common aim*, that they seek their *own exaltation*, yet do not alwaies do it in the *same instances*. For example, *some* have coveted the repute of *profound inquisitors*, and this Vanity has prompted them to dive so deep into the

the *bowels* of every the *plaineſt doctrine*, till at laſt they have twiſted and entangled them into the moſt *perplexing difficulties*. Theſe *Navigators* think they have never ſail'd ſucceſsfully till they have found out a *Terra incognita*, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable world; nor make it their buſineſs to *reſolve* Doubts, but *ſtart* them. *Another ſort* of men there are of ſo faſtidious and petulant wits, that they diſdain an *opinion* of which themſelves are not the *Authors*; they love not to have their underſtandings preſcrib'd to, by the preconceptions of others, how divinely ſoever inſpir'd, and will rather have a Religion of their *own making*, than of *his* whom they pretend to worſhip. And this, 'tis to be doubted is the bottom of the great *veneration* ſome have paid to *Reaſon*, which they have ſet up in the *Throne*, not only in defiance of *blind implicit aſſent*, but even of *divine revelation*. But in the mean time 'tis to be obſerv'd, that 'tis not reaſon *in general*, the common excellency of our nature that is thus advanc'd, but every mans own *private* and *individual*; which upon a juſt ſcanning will often be found the moſt diſtant thing from what it is call'd: *Paſſion* and *Phancy*, by that omnipotent advantage of being a mans own, often paſſing for *deep diſcourſe* and *ratiocination*: and what a fruitful harveſt of Tares ſuch ſeed is apt to produce, our *reaſon* would inform us if our *experience* did not. To theſe we may add *another rank* of men, who vehemently thirſting after a *name* in the

world, hope to acquire that by being the *disseminators* of *novel doctrines*; they think while they go on in the *beaten track*, they shall be obscur'd in the *Throng*; the only way to make themselves conspicuous is to be singular: Thus fondly chusing to be *eminent*, though by the infamous Characters of *Heretick* or *Schismatick*, and (like him that fired *Diana*'s Temple to secure himself from oblivion) build themselves *Monuments* of the *Churches ruines*: and sure this *Theudas* his ambition of being some body, has helpt to raise more *opinions* than he did *men*. Yet commonly it answers it even in that circumstance also; for when by *separating themselves* from the *unity of the faith*, they have rendred themselves remarkable, their next aim is to have *others joyn* to them; and so they may have the honour of being *leaders*, care not though it be into the ditch. To be call'd of men *Rabbi Rabbi*, is enchanting Musick to any *Pharisee*, and serves like the Timbrels in *Tophet* to drown the cries not of their *Children*, but *Mother* scorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed so impetuous and uncontroulable is this kind of *vanity*, that like a mighty torrent, it bears down all before it, overwhelms not only the opposite *vertues*, but even all *vices* that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this case lay severe restraints upon their most *intimate sensualities*, when they suspect them *treacherous* to this grand Design. The *Wolf* shall be muzled and made to behave himself with the meekness beseeming the *Sheeps* cloathing. The *Swine* shall

shall be washt and by an unnatural violence withheld from the *mire*: All their rapacious and bestial *appetites* controul'd and made tame, that they worry not their *reputation*. And all this for a little naked *popularity*, for whose dear purchase, very many have thought fit to divest themselves, both of lawful and unlawful *enjoyments*; and have thought the tumultuous *applause* of a few factious spirits worth all that *self-denial*. But all Pride is not so perfectly *Camælion* as to subsist upon this *meer air*, there is another kind of it that proposes to its self something beyond this: such is the affectation of rule and dominion, which though in respect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a *Chimera* as the former; yet commonly they that are under such a *Jurisdiction*, find to their cost 'tis more than *Imaginative*. And God knows this *aspiring humour*, has been no less fatally active in *Ecclesiastick* than in *Civil* affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of *Anarchy* than by *those* who most impatiently coveted a share in its government; for where this spirit of ambition is the Impellent, it does like the *Demoniack* in the Gospel, burst asunder all *fetters* and *chains*, violates the unity both of doctrine and discipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority think the *door* opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of so tedious an expectation, chuse rather to make breaches in the *walls* (nay sometimes to undermine the *foundation*) than to want an *access* to

their Desires. Neither is there any thing so sacred, which upon this occasion they cannot prostitute; when *Diotrephes*, 3 *Joh.* 9. seeks preheminence, the Dictates even of an *Apostle* shall be rejected, and even the divinity of *Christ, God blessed for ever*, be trampled on, when *Arius* wants a foot-stool to climb up to his affected greatness. In a word, if we Examine the occurrencies of all ages, we shall find that either the eagerness of *acquiring*, or the Revenge of *missing dignities*, have been the great *instigators* of Ecclesiastick Feuds; and sure our *Modern* stories, are not likely to fall short of the *Ancient*, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes *some* thus passionately desirous of rule, so it makes *others* as impatient of being ruled, and even those who cannot hope to arrive to *give* Laws, will not endure to *be under* those already established. That *this* is indeed the Christian *liberty* for which many in our daies have so unchristianly contended, is too apparent, the *fundamental quarrel* has been against *subjection*: Yet to countenance and abett that, whole *Armies* of frivolous cavils have been rais'd, and the *Church* attacqued in every its remotest concern, and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the simile was first affixt, yet in a perverse sense it imitates the *Ointment* of *Aaron* in *descending from the head to the skirts of the cloathing*: not only the *supreme* and *more eminent parts*, but the most *slight extrinsick* and *inferior relatives* to Religion being aspersi and depraved; and the most *innocent* Circumstances

cumstances of Civil or Natural actions made *criminal*, when applied to Divine things. A strange *infective power*, which these men have convey'd into Gods service, that it must thus pollute every thing that approaches it. That the *place* where his Honour dwells, must become a *Pesthouse*, and diffuse *contagion* to all in it. (I wish by the way their *Sacriledge* had not been too valiant in despising the Danger of those *infected utensils*, which may perhaps sadly verifie the reproach, and prove *treacherous prizes*) and when mens *zeal* operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of *internal sanctity* devours all *outward decency*, and *God* is to be honoured and exalted by those ways, whereby *men* would think themselves affronted, and vilified; we have too great reason to think such a zeal as little according to *godliness* as *knowledge*, and that it is not so much the *tenderness* of their Consciences, no nor generally the *weakness* of their Brains, but the *Iron sinew* in their Necks, which makes them at once so scrupulous, and so clamorous; for though the *former* might be suppos'd owing to Error, the *later* can surely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other instances might be given to shew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the rise and first being of our divisions; and having thus given them birth, it does not like the *Ostrich* abandon its Brood, but has as great an influence in the *cherishing* and *maintaining*, as it had in *creating* them. Of this there need no other proof than the meer *nature* of Pride, which as it

averts nothing more than *self-condemnation*; so upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreversibly engag'd in the pursuit of its first undertakings, any *desisting* being interpretatively a *confession* either of an Error or a Defeat, both which are insupportable to an assuming temper: So that besides the *original incentives* forementioned, it has this of *disdain* superadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the *success*, but the *credit* of the first enterprize depending upon a vigorous prosecution: So that *Catilines* Maxim of *Villany* seems to have been adopted into some mens *divinity*, and they think past Crimes are only to be secur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only *hope* to atchieve their *design*, or hide their *shame* which thus animates them, *despair* will do it to a yet higher degree. Our Concupiscible and Irascible appetites dwell not so remote, but they are ready reserves to one another, and what was *desire* in the pursuit, becomes *anger* and *revenge* in the disappointment; and sure we need not be told the wild effects of those passions. How many men have in a *furious despair* over-acted even their own *projects*, and have made it a malicious consolation in their ruine, to get it attended with that of the publick? As *Herod*, who to secure a *lamentation* at his death, commanded a *Massacre* should accompany it, or (to give a more Ecclesiastical instance) like *Aerius*, who sought the abolishing of that order in the Church, whereof himself could not partake. I wish no mans *Conscience* in our

our days were qualified to suggest a fresher example. But whilest 'tis so many ways the *interest* of Pride to abet our *contentions*, we cannot think it so sluggish or uninduſtrious an *agent*, as not to find out *expedients* for its purpose. I shall not attempt to give a particular of its *instruments*, when I have said that *Schism* is one of them, I need not add more, since that alone serves both to *complete* and *perpetuate* the Mischief of all our speculative dissentions. How close a Band of concord the *communicating in holy duties* is, we may learn by *Jeroboam*, who seems so well to have understood its unitive efficacy, that he durst not trust the newly divided *Tribes* in a joynt resort to the Temple; and therefore least the *rupture* he had made in the State should close again, he thinks it necessary to make *another* in the Church, and secure his defection from his *Prince*, by that from his *God*. But we need not borrow a *testimony* from that his impious *Policy*, we have a more *Authentick attestation* from the holy *Psalmist*, who when he would describe the *greatest entireness*, Exemplifies it by the *walking to the house of God as friends*, *Psal.* 55. 14. And the *Apostle* goes yet higher, and from our common *participation* of the Eucharist, infers not only our *union*, but our *incorporation*. *We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 17. And then sure me may on the contrary conclude, that our *separation* must have the quite distant effects; alienate our *affections*, and by that means still more estrange our *Judgements*.

For

For besides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplifie the *differences*, that they may acquit themselves from the *scandal* of a causeless separation, and this God knows is the usual Method among us, when we have broken *communion*, our only study is not how to *repair*, but *justifie* it. The adversaries *Tenets* are rigourously scanned, new *Charges* exhibited, and the *Schism* defended upon those later discoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then sure no man can doubt but this is a *proper way*, both to *multiply and Eternize disputes*; and 'tis abundantly manifest, that vanity and elation of mind is the cause that Men thus prefer a *mistaken reputation*, before their own *innocence* or the Churches *peace*. Indeed if we throughly consider it, we shall find *Pride* is one of the fatallest instruments of Excision, the *two-edg'd sword* by which adverse parties do mutually cut themselves from one another. The very *elements* and *constitutive parts* of a Schismatick, being the *Esteem of himself*, and the *Contempt of others*. *I am not as this Publican was*, we know, the voice of the proud *Pharisee*, whose very name signifies *separation*, and our modern *Separatists* do but Echo the same note, when they pronounce all those *Heretical* or *Carnal* from whom they have withdrawn. Or perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient president, those of whom the Prophet *Esay* speaks, *Esay 65. 5.* which say, *Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*;

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an Insolent kind of language which the *Cathari* in the *primitive times* did not more exactly transcribe, than many *Sects* of differing denominations have done in *ours*. But 'tis to be remembred, that while the *Pharisee* lookt so fastidiously on the poor *Publican*, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and those *refined Zealots* who fear'd *contagion* from the approach of their more innocent Brethren, could boldly venture on the *pollutions* of the most detestable Idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both instances. In the mean time 'tis a sad contemplation, that so much of that *zeal* which makes such a glistering in the World, shall when brought to the Touch, be found *adulterate*, that the transcendent *purity* men boast of, should prove but a more sublimated *wickedness*, and their *pretence* to spirituality be verified only in *spiritual pride*. Alas, is not the whole *circuit* of Secular things wide enough to contain this *swelling humour*? Are there not *Pomps* and *Vanities* of the world enough to entertain this one *Lust*, but must this *Moabite* be brought into the *Sanctuary*? Can we not be *elevated* enough unless we *trample upon* all that is holy, and make *Religion* Factor for our *Ambition*? We find some very confidently point out *Antichrist* upon the strength of this one prædicted circumstance, that he was to *sit in the Temple of God*. But what need we travel beyond the *Alps* to find out that, which *every where* presents its self? Our Pride does too unhappily answer the description; and though there

there is no instance wherein it can cease to be *Antichristian*, yet surely it is more eminently so, when it thus usurps *Gods seat*, and rules in Sacred things. Would God the *pains* and *animosity* which has been spent in discovering and reviling *other* Antichrists, had been diverted to the pulling down of *this*, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the Designers, for were this Pride *Eradicated*, the Foundation of all Spiritual usurpations were *undermin'd*. But alas, those who exclaim the most loudly against all *foreign Tyranny* on their Consciences, do obsequiously bow to this *intestine Usurper*, make an entire dedition of themselves, and submit to the severest and ignoblest *vassallage*. They have invested it with so absolute and soveraign a Power, that (as *Samuel* warns the *Israelites* of their King, 1 *Sam.* 8.) they are not to call any thing their own when it is useful to its service: All their powers, all their interests are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its *pomp*, but to fight its *battels*. Men quarrel and contend till not only *themselves*, but even *Christianity* its self expire in the contest. But if it be indeed certain that every *War* is so far unjustifiable, as are the *causes* of it, 'twill surely be a competent prejudice against our contentions, that our Pride is so much concern'd in them, which is so unchristian a *motive*, as all the *holy-water* wherewith men have sprinkled it, can never baptize into a *cleanness*; all the *borrowed dresses* of Zeal and Sanctity, however they may *disguise*, can never

legitimate

legitimate it. Those Arts of concealment may indeed add a *new guilt*, that of *Hypocrisie*, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the *old*: And how *Saint-like a form* soever our *Vain-glory* puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from *him*, who can *transform himself into an Angel of light*, whose aspirings have first subverted *himself*, and now go on to propagate both his Crime and Ruine to *us*; nor has he ever manag'd that *design* with more Art or Success, than by thus making our Pride a *partition wall* to divide us from *one another*, and consequently from *God* too; who being, as our Church styles him, the *author of Peace* and *lover of Concord*, can never joyn himself with the *disturbers of both*, but must necessarily be disobliged by our Dissentions and Schisms.

CHAP. XIV.

A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Secondly, Curiosity.

IF now we proceed farther in our enquiry we shall find, that another grand *incendiary* of our Disputes is *Curiosity*: A vice which though in some respects it may be reckoned a *species* of the *former*, that of Pride, yet in others it admits a *distinct consideration*. This is that baneful *weed* which the Devil made a shift to steal even into *Paradise*, and which has ever since affected

fected the *richest soils,* the most pregnant and polite Wits; nor did it only eject *man* from thence, but it has improved the *original curse,* and multiplied those *briers* and *thorns* among which he was cast, yea, transplanted them from the *Earth,* where they could only raze the skin, into the *Brain,* where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal Part of Man. Nay farther, even that *sweat of his brows,* which was to extirpate them from the *ground,* serves but to water and cherish them in his *mind*; his very *industry* being in this case the extremest *ill-husbandry,* and the more *pains* he takes, the farther he removes himself from all *real advantages* of his toil.

THERE are some parts of *Knowledge* which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them not only as he did the interdicted *Tree,* by Precept and Commination, but with Difficulties and Impossibilities; made it not only our *sin* and danger, but our *Folly* and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the Mysterious parts of our *Religion,* which he shews us as it were a-far off to exercise our *faith* and *reverence,* but stoops them not to our *sense* and *disquisition.* These he has placed like the *Sun,* where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholsome *distance,* we should find none but *benigne effects*; but so importunate are the instigations of Curiosity, that no *bounds* will keep us from the *Mount*: We will needs break through into the *thick darkness,* how dreadful soever the

thunders

thunders and *lightnings* are in the way. Like bold *Phaetons* we despise all *benefits* wherewith the Father of light and us can court us; unless we may guide his *Chariot*; and we moralize the *Fable* as well in the tragicalness of the *event*, as the insolence of the *undertaking*; this unhappy Curiosity having not only ruin'd many of the *inquisitors*, but set the whole *world* also in a *conflagration*. Nor is this temerity more *fatal* in its Success, than *impious* in its Foundation: For besides that, it is a direct *invasion* of Gods peculiar, and *violation* of his Command, it does evidently imply a *distrust*, either of his Wisdom or his Goodness; supposes him either so *ignorant* of the strength of those faculties himself has made, that he has assigned them unproportionable objects, and so they must have new work cut out for them by our selves; or else presumes his *Eye evil* towards his own Creatures; that as the *Devil* once suggested to our *first Parents*, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of some parts of felicity, like one that had been Bountiful only upon *surprize* and *incogitancy*, illiberally retracts and contradicts his *original design* of making Man completely happy. Nay, indeed this represents him unkind, not only to *us his created Images*, but even to that Eternal and express image of his Person, *the Son of his bosom*, who may well be thought to have been, as despised in *his Eyes*, as he was once in *ours*, *Esay* 53. 3. if he have so cheaply expos'd him for their sakes, to whom he denies any of those *intellectual advantages*, which

difference

difference *them* from *Beasts.* Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converse with *vulgar ordinary things,* we create *prodigies,* put *new forms* upon him that is *unchangeable,* rob *divinity* of its most inseperable *attribute,* and not only *disobey* God, but *reproach* him. And then 'tis no wonder if that which affords so little *glory* to God, hath no more *good-will* for Men, and that which thus wars with *Heaven,* leave little peace on *Earth.* Indeed if we will be building our *Babels,* and thus assault *Omnipotence,* 'tis but just we should have our *language confounded,* and that that *knowledge* for which we boldly attempt to rifle Gods cabinet, should like the *Coal* from the Altar, serve only to embroil and consume the *sacrilegious invaders.* Yet besides what is owing to divine vengeance in the case, the thing has in its self a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when so many men are engag'd in a *blind search,* 'tis not imaginable they should all *stumble* upon the same Notions, and supposing them to fall upon *variety,* 'tis impossible but mens fond overweening of their own conceits and petulant disdains of others, will improve that *variety* into Opposition, and that *opposition* into set and Solemn Feuds. And God knows, the Church is too effectively acquainted with this *fatal gradation,* and can experimentally attest the *unhappy propriety* of this sort of Curiosity towards the engendring of *discord* and *confusion.*

BUT besides this *higher* rank of things which God hath set so much *above* us, there are others

others of an *inferior* sort, as much *below* us, which are concealed from us, not for their *sublimity*, but their *uselesness*; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but *flesh*, unable to bear the nearer approaches of *divinity*, and so talks with us as once with *Moses* through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that *he breathed into us the breath of life*, a vital active spirit, whose motions he expects should own the dignity of its *original*, and as it was its self an *emanation* of the Essential Goodness, should aim at only *real* and *solid good*, and not evaporate and exhaust its powers in *mean* and *impertinent pursuits*. And upon this score also, he has found it necessary to hide many things from us, not that they would *dazzle*, but *misemploy* our Eye; not *swallow* up our Understanding, but *divert* our Attention, from what is more important: Of this sort are those many thin *aerial speculations*, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiser to Salvation; yet such a value does our *inquisitive Nature* set upon every thing for its being *hid*, that as if our Life were bound up with these Secrets, and all our Felicity dwelt in the Shade of these recesses, we pursue this search with indefatigable *industry*, ransack all corners with as great *diligence* as the *Woman* for her lost piece of Silver, *Luk.* 15. 8. And as if this were indeed the *treasure* hid in the field, sell *all* that we have, lay out our whole *selves* upon the *purchase*. Indeed he that shall consider what solemn Disquisitions

there are upon the slighteſt, and inconſiderableſt Subjects, with what Advertence and concern Queſtions of this kind are bandied in the world, muſt wonder how men can at once be ſo *ſerious* and ſo *trifling*; or that thoſe who can ſay *ſo much*, ſhould not once ask themſelves to what purpoſe they ſay *any thing*. Yet what multitudes of men are there engag'd in ſuch chaſes as this? when alas, the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten: but what *Solomon* ſayes of the *ſluggard*, Prov. 12. 27. that *he roſteth not that which he took in hunting*, is true of the contrary temper, theſe *over-buſie ſpirits* whoſe labour is their only reward, they hunt a *ſhadow*, and chaſe the *wind*; and when they ſtrein to their utmoſt ſpeed, there is ſtill the wonted Diſtance between *them* and their *aims*; all their eager purſuits bring them no acqueſt; but after they have traverſt ſo much *ground*, traced all the *mazes* that learned Curioſity could contrive to perplex men, and ſtudied to the wearineſs of the *fleſh*, if not to the quenching of the *Spirit* too, they are ſtill in the ſame *ignorance* from whence they ſet out, and 'twere well if they were alſo in the ſame *doubtfulneſs*: But the unhappineſs of it is, they acquire a *confidence* without any *true ground* of it; and get ſuch a Knowledge as may *puff up*, but not *edifie*. This was eminently exemplified in the *Gnoſticks* of old, whoſe vain *Chimæras*, and *fooliſh queſtions*, as the *Apoſtle* calls them, *Tit.* 3. 9. paſt with them for ſuch a *ſuperlative wiſdom*, as gave them Inſolence to diſcriminate themſelves from

from others by that swelling *Title,* and monopolize the reputation of *Science,* which yet if we will believe the great Doctor of the *Gentiles,* and he too brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel,* the greatest *Rabbi* of the *Jews,* was *science* falsly so called. And God knows, they want not successors in this as well as in other particulars, men are so possest with their own *Phancies* that they take them for *Oracles,* and think they see visions, and are arrived to some Extraordinary *revelations* of Truth, when indeed they do but dream *dreams,* and amuse themselves with the Phantastick *Ideas* of a busie imagination. Yet would they only please themselves in the delusion, the Phrensie were more innocent; but like the prouder sort of *Lunaticks,* they will needs be *Kings* and *Rulers,* impose their wild *conjectures* for *Laws* upon others, and denounce *War* against all that receive them not: And this is that which makes the great combustion, and confusion among us; for while one man Opines one way, another another, and each will obtrude his *opinion* on every-body else; 'tis impossible but the *contests* should be sharp and endless; for each man labours under a double Impatience, the *one* of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the *reciprocalness* of the Injury ought to allay the *displeasure* at it, yet men so much more consider what they *suffer* than what they *do,* that every one crys out aloud of that hard measure, which him-

self offers without regret. And between *winds* so contrary and so fierce, 'tis no wonder if *storms* arise; and in such *Tempests* has Religion so long been tossed, that it now needs the interposition of a divine *Miraculous power*, to keep it from sinking; for alas, these *Skirmishes* expire not with the first Propugners of the Opinions; they perhaps began as *single Duellers*, but then they soon get their troops about them, have their *partisans* and *abettors*, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to posterity. And indeed this propagation of Strife, both in these *trifling*, and the former more *profound* speculations, is the most fatal circumstance of the whole Case: Were it not for this, though we might have *many Errors*, we could have *no Sects*. And if the Church might be sometimes wounded with the *darts* of single Adversaries, yet she could not be surrounded and besieg'd with *combinations* and *confederacies*. Some straggling Souldiers might prove *renegados*, but they would not revolt in *troops* and *legions*. We should not have such numerous Parties, who with the greatest violation of Christian unity, denominate themselves, not from the *grand author and finisher of our Faith*; but from the *first brocher of their Idoliz'd opinions*. In the mean time, 'tis a sad contemplation, that a little *vain curiosity* should weigh so much, or the Churches *peace* so little with us: that we should sacrifice the one, to the *satisfaction* shall I say, or rather to the *whetting* and *inflaming* of the other. But 'tis a yet sadder, that this should chiefly

chiefly be done by those whose *learning* enables, and whose *profession* should devote to the most noble and most profitable Studies; nay have the highest obligations to correct those *exorbitances* in others, which with such *Art* and *labour* they propagate and teach. How wounding a spectacle is it to see our greatest *Heroes* like *Hercules* at the *Distaffe*, thus degenerously employed, and to find those who were by Christ design'd for *fishers of Men*, thus entertain themselves like *Children*, with *picking up Shells* and *Pebbles* on the shore; and which is yet more unmanly *wrangling* about them too. Indeed at this rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the *disciples* Complaint, *we have travailed all night and have taken nothing*. This sure is so little the way to win Souls, that he whose business it is to destroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and subtle *disquisitions*, upon the very same score that one of the *Gothick* Commanders, advised the sparing of the *Italian Schools* and *Libraries*; Let us, sayes he, leave them their Books, that whilest they amuse themselves with such *follies*, we may subdue them at our *pleasure*. It is the saying of the Wise-man, *there is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness*; and sure if there be a wisdom acquired by these curious Enquiries, 'tis of this sort, like the Knowledge of Good and Evil attained by our first Parents, which taught them to know the Good only by its *loss*, and the Evil by its *smart*. Indeed our too high, and transcending *speculations*

on the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other; are like the *torrid* and *frigid* Zone, the one consumes us with its *heat*, the other chils, and benumns us with its *cold*; that turns us to *Cinders*, this to *Ice*. These little trifling Notions being too slight an exercise to keep *heat* in our Christianity, which not only expresses but maintains its *life* by strong and vigorous Motions. And therefore between these *two intemperate*, God has provided us an *habitable Clime*, I mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to practice. Here he would have us dwell and converse, fix our thoughts and studies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a subject for our contemplation. We see as deep Speculators, as any now assume to be, found it far otherwise. *David* could entertain himself with the *Meditation of God's Law* (not his hidden Decrees or counsels) *all the Day*, Psal. 119. 97, Nay it seems the Matter was so *copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confin'd within that *narrow boundary* of Time, but invaded the *night* also; forced him to defaulk from his *rest*, to bestow on his *meditations, I have thought of thy Name O Lord in the night season, and have kept thy Law*, Vers. 55. Neither is it a vain expence of Time, which it thus tempts to, but gives the happiest improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational studies tend, gives understanding, Vers. 130. *makes wise the simple*, Psal. 19. 7. and this also in an eminent degree, such as set him above his teachers, and his Elders also.

also. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine Enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments,* Psal. 119. 98, 99, 100. These are high and liberal Elogies of this divine study: and if any shall seek to divert an unwelcome inference by saying that *David* spoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the transport of his *zeal,* rather than the estimate of his *judgment*; we must resolve the objector far removed from such religious *excesses,* and under the contrary *defect*: yet the *cause* will so well bear an *appeal,* that he may be trusted to consult farther, let him advise with *Solomon,* whose large desires and possessions too of wisdom, must suppose him no stranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very same, and that not in his *devouter extasies,* but in his most *compos'd sedate temper,* when he solemnly seats himself in his School, reads *Ethicks* to his disciples, and professes his design of giving *subtilty* to the Simple, and to the young man *knowledge* and *discretion,* Prov. 1. 4. for if his whole book of *Proverbs* be scanned, the sum of it will be found to be nothing else but an *exhortation* to the study of this practick Wisdom. Nay when his own *understanding* was improved and advanc'd by *Experience* also, when he had not only *beg'd,* but *bought* wisdom, after he had given his Curiosity its full unbounded Range, compassed the whole Universe, and exa-

min'd not only in *contemplation*, but by sensitive *experiment*, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of Men, *Eccl.*2.3. we find after all this busie inquest, he gives up his *verdict* in this form, *Eccles.* 12. 13. Let us hear the end of the whole matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man*: And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of Men, and he too inspir'd by the Omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive Responses from *Delphos* than from between the *Cherubims*: Let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting *Socrates* to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the *moral part* of Learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more *Airy speculations*, which better'd not mens Manners, but were only λόγων ψόφος, *a noise and clattering of Words.* And *Pythagoras* his School defines Philosophy, ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης κάθαρσιν καὶ τελειότητα, *the cleansing and perfecting of humane life*, which two things are said to be done, first by *Vertue*, whose business it is to remove τῆς ἀμετρίαν τῶν παθῶν, *the inordination of our Passions*: Secondly, by *Truth*, which restores θεῖον εἶδος, *the Image and pourtraicture of God.* And since this is the joynt suffrage both of Religion and Reason, why should those that pretend to either defie both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek *beggary* and emptiness,

emptiness, who may with far less labour be *rich* at home? Alas, 'tis not *bare knowledge*, how great or universal soever, that can possess us of *felicity*. Were it possible for us to have a window into *Heaven*, to see all the Divine secrets, yet that might be but like the Rich mans prospect into *Abrahams* bosom, while himself was in the *bottomless pit*. They are not only the *gross* and *illiterate Souls* that must feed those *flames*, the most *Aerial* and *Sublimated*, are rather the more proper fuel for an *immaterial Fire*, and the knowledge we carry thither, render us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing but how to keep himself happy. It was at once the Observation and Wonder of *Plutarch*, that whereas God has several *incommunicable properties* as Power and Immortality, &c. these all men aspir'd to, in the mean time neglected that of *Goodness*, wherein he was willing all men should share. And sure there is now cause of the same complaint, we would have Omniscience and all parts of Divinity besides the holiness, yet alas, those without these would prove but fatal acquests, and that approach towards being *Gods*, would only make us the more *Devils*. The only advantagious as well as possible *way* of Assimilation with God is by *purity*, and the *means* of that an Attentive consideration of those *Divine revelations*, which are to regulate our practice; these at once dispence *light* and *warmth*, direct and revive the Soul: And if men would not exhale *vapours* to cloud and darken them, Eclipse the clearest

Truths

Truths by *difficulties* of their own creating, no man could miss his way to Heaven for want of light, and yet so vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkness, as if their *Mists* should like that *which Watered the new-form'd Earth, Gen.* 2. 6. supply the place of the *dew* of Heaven. But certainly to all such in their profusest liberalities, we need make no other Request than *Diogenes* did to *Alexander*, desire them only that they will not stand between *us* and the *Sun*, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we should soon discern the inconsiderableness of those things whose effects have been so sadly considerable to Christendom; those many *Chimæras* which we wrangle and fight about, would in this Sun-shine appear but *Motes* that dance in the Air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the most luxurious Revels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but a St. *Pauls* doctrine throughly imbib'd, our Curious Arts, περίεργα γράμματα, *superfluous unconcerning studies*, would as it happened, *Acts* 19. be supplanted; and our *devotion* if sufficiently accended, would as theirs, *burn up* innumerable *books* of this sort. And sure as this would be the *greatest*, so it would be the most *triumphant Bonfire* Christendom ever saw, as being not only an *indication*, but a *means* of the *mighty growth*, and prevailing of the Word of God, which our vain *Curiosities* serve only to impede and obstruct, while they do as mightily advance *dissentions* & *animosities* amongst men. CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

A ſurvey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Thirdly, Intereſt.

BUT beſides theſe *two*, there is a *third* Fomenter of diviſions, which either for its activity or ſucceſs muſt not ſubſcribe to either of them, and that is *Intereſt*. This is the great *Idol* to which the world bows: To this we pay our devouteſt homage, give it not only our *knees*, but our *hearts*; and as if the making us rich were a *ſecond* Creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the *firſt*: We ſacrilegiouſly entitle our profit to all the Prerogatives of a Creator, give it an abſolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to preſcribe us all our meaſures of good and evil; to rule not only our *Reaſon* but our *Paſſions* too, (a Soveraignty alas we would never yield to our God) and as if the *giving* us *laws* were not Empire enough, we permit it to impoſe *Religions* alſo; for ſure they that obſerve how great an influence it has in *Church affairs*, will conclude it governs more than the *ſecular* part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we ſhall find 'tis no *novel uſurpation*, but though void of other Title, has the Preſcription of *many ages*. Divinity has long ſince been made the handmaid of Policy, and Religions modelled by conveni-

conveniencies of State. The golden *Calves* became venerable *deities*, when they were found apt to secure *Jeroboams* Jealousies: And *Machiavils* policy, that *States should serve themselves of Religion*, was a common practice long before 'twas his Rule. And this Example of Communities has been transcrib'd by single Persons. In the Old Testament we find frequent mention of those *mercenary* Prophets, that turn'd the *office* into a *trade*, divin'd for *money*, nay, sometimes for more contemptible hire, *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread*: And in the New we see the same motive of Secular advantage had force enough to turn an *Ecclesiastick* into a *Laick*, make *Demas* degrade himself, and desert his Ministry, and as it thus stopt his mouth from preaching the *Truth*, so it open'd those of Others to divulge *Errors*. Such were those deceivers of whom St. *Paul* speaks, *Tit.* 1. 11. who *spake things they ought not for filthy lucres sake*. So when the same Apostle declaims the most earnestly against the *love of money as the root of all evil*, we find he fetches his proof of that Charge, from its having *made men erre from the faith*, 1 *Tim.* 6. 10. And 'tis St. *Peters* prediction, that the most damnable Heresies, even the *denying of the Lord that bought them*, should be introduced by *those*, who through Covetousness should make *merchandize* of their *Proselytes*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 4. and sure the *event* attests the *presage* to have concern'd more than the Age immediately succeeding, there being none of the subsequent which hath not in some degree assisted its completion,

pletion, nor have we cauſe to wonder *here-at*, ſince 'tis obvious to diſcern the conjunction and dependence between Covetouſneſs and Hereſie. For the *Itching ears* the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, being an *Epidemick diſeaſe*, give fair opportunity to every *Mountebank* to try his *Experiments*. When men nauſeate *Old* truths, becauſe they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very ſame reaſon, they ſhould reject them, even becauſe they are *New*: When they love no Teachers, but ſuch as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but ſuch as they love; there is little doubt, but there will be *Mints* enough ſet on work, when the *Coiners* can thus at once *ſtamp new opinions* for their Diſciples, and *Money* for Themſelves: And God knows they are not *a few* of our Diviſions, that have thence taken *birth*. It will be needleſs to ravel far into the Records of Elder times, every mans memory will be able to ſuggeſt to him too many, and too pertinent inſtances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too viſible, that much of ſome mens late pretence to *Godlineſs* was but a real purſuit of *Gain*; and the *new light* ſerv'd to guide them to their *neighbours Coffers*: And probably many of our Diſputes had been ſuperſeded, had not the Authors foreſeen, that though they loſt the Queſtion, they ſhould gain what they more ſought. A few eſſays had diſcover'd how much the *Populacy* were pleas'd with *Novelties*, eſpecially ſuch as at once gratified their *Levity* and their *Pride*, by caſting ill reflections on the things or Perſons to whom they owed

owed a reverence; and the *liberal contributions* ſuch Teachers met with, ſerv'd ſtill to invite more *labourers* into that *work*, where without the uneaſineſs of a long Expectation, their very *ſeed-time* was their *Harveſt*, and by ſowing *Tares*, they immediately reaped *Gold*: And 'tis no wonder if ſuch *quick returns* made them *diligent* at the trade, induſtrious to provide thoſe wares they ſaw they could put off ſo well. And would to God we were ſecure, that *this way* of Traffick were yet at an end, for ſo long as theſe *ſpiritual Merchants* can thus impoſe on their *credulous Chapmen*, make them buy one miſchief with another, and exhauſt their *Eſtates* to endanger their *Souls*, we muſt not hope our *diſſentions* will ever ceaſe, our *flames* ever be extinct, that have ſo much *matter* to feed them, and ſuch *importunate blaſts* to blow them up.

BUT *covetouſneſs* is of too unſatiable a nature to be contented with one way of ſupply, 'tis like the *Sea*, that receives the Tribute of *all Rivers* (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore thoſe who have reſolv'd upon the *thriving ſort* of Piety, have ſeldom embarkt all their *hopes* in one *bottom*, nor ſo depended on the *bounty* of their Proſelytes, as to neglect other *ways of preying* for themſelves. They wanted not providence to foreſee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is: That the ſame giddy and violent *humour*, which had opened their hands *ſo wide*, might by working another way cloſe them *as faſt*; or if their *inclinations* continued, their *abilities*

abilities might fail; (a thing very possible to those, who have such suckers) or if both these remain'd, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it necessary to have some other reserve; and besides this way of *flattering*, their willing *benefactors* out of part, contrived another of *forcing* their unwilling Neighbours out of all their *possessions*: So making the spoils of some mens *honesty* a richer booty than that of others *folly*. Hence *Shiboleths* found out of Covenants and engagements, to give opportunity of destroying a dissenting brother; by this Art a *fat benefice* became *crime* and *witness* too against its Incumbent, and he was sure to be *unorthodox*, that was worth the *plundering*. Thus alas has the *Altar* of God been attended, or rather invaded by those whose very *approach* was a *guilt*, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its *horns*, than pretend to its *service*; for sure that God, who has declar'd he hates *robbery* for *burnt-offering*, cannot much affect *Robbers* for *Priests*. But this is a Theme so unpleasant I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wish that the memory of it were so extinct, that it might remain no where but in the penitential Litanies of the Offenders; my design in the present reflection is only to make it an evidence how much *covetousness* promotes our *contentions*, which sure is not more visible any where than in this instance: For where there is a design of supplanting, that necessarily requires another of accusing; (even *Jezabel* her self projects not to seize on *Naboths* Vineyard without

without a precedent *Charge*) to comply with which necessity, not only the *lives* and *conversations*, but the *doctrines* and *opinions* of our most eminent Divines have been strangely misrepresented, and when that proved not *fence* enough to the *reputation* of their Oppressors, they have thought fit to change the *Scene*, and to combate those *opinions* in their *true shape*, upon which they could not so well fasten their *disguise*. I shall not here need to say with how much, or how little prætext of reason they managed those Disputes: 'Tis enough to my purpose that such Disputes there were, and those founded in the desire of acquiring secular advantages, which sufficiently attests *Interest* to be a potent *Abettor* of our quarrels.

BUT God knows that is a truth of which the *world* affords so many proofs, that we need not confine our selves to this little *Angle* of it, or owe our *convictions* only to our *domestick transactions*; if we look abroad we shall find it too often exemplified. The memorable *disturbance* given to the Church, as well as State of *Germany* by the *Anabaptists*, is a pregnant instance; whose *new opinion* was but an expedient of investing themselves in *new possessions*, and their *second Baptism* but the Solemnity of espousing, not only the *flesh*, but the *world* also, which they had renounced in the *first*.

AND would God they had been the only set of Men, whose *doctrines* were subservient to their *interests*, for such tumultuous and *Plebeian projects*,

jects, though like a *land-floud* they make great spoil at the present, yet soon sink again. Such avowed and *excessive greedines's* devours *its self*, and the *instruments* by which it wrought: so that the *defeat* of the secular Design, is commonly the *routing* those Opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the same desire has the advantage of a sober guidance; when *Avarice* puts on the *Canonical habit*, and twists its self not only with the *practice* of Men, but the *doctrines* of the Church; when *articles* of Religion shall be estimated by their *profitableness*, and Ecclesiasticks *dispute*, as Lay-men *fight for Money*; then alas the *mischief* seems fatal, the *disease* so fixt and radicated, as at once discourages, and mocks the attempts of *cure*.

THAT this is the case not only in a *particular* and *private* Church, but that which assumes to be the *Universal* and *Catholick* is too apparent. The one Position of the Popes right to dispose Kingdoms, outstrips all other principles of rapine: this is to drive a *whole-sale* trade, when all other petty Merchants, deal but for *parcels*: which as it is a much *bolder*, so is it a more *prejudicial* attempt than the invading of private possessions, and this *Duo gladii*, the double armature of S. *Peter*, a more destructive Engin, than the tumultuary weapon snatcht up by a *Fanatick*: but sure S. *Peter's sword* though once rashly managed by himself, was never designd to arm his *successors* to invade Kingdoms: This *property* of it seems rather to have been de-

rived from the *Prætorian souldiers*, who insolently assumed the disposing of the Empire, wherein they at the last arrived to that *impudence*, that after the Death of *Pertinax* they made *open port sale* of it, αἰσχρῶς καὶ ἀτίμως ὥσπερ καὶ τῶν ἰδιωτικῶς κειμηλίων, *in a base and sordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares*: I cannot say the Court of *Rome* transcribes that indecent owning of the traffick; but it has in other instances so well attested its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that Crowns and Scepters are conferred *gratis*. And to *this* so advantageous a Doctrine *others* bear proportion: Those of *Purgatory*, *Indulgences*, and *Supererogation*, are ready instances, wherein the *Assertors* themselves seem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit, for when they come to minute definitions they vary and disagree; satisfie one another, as little as their common *Antagonists*: and therefore in the Council of *Trent* they prudently chose in their decrees to propose the bare *Articles* backt by the Authority of the Church, and *Anathemas* of the Council, as having by precedent *discussions* of the points in their congregations discern'd the small *accord* that was among themselves, when they descended to *particulars*. And indeed the *Opinions* were so various as to the grounds of the Doctrines, that one would wonder how from so differing *premisses*, they should all inferr the same *conclusion*; were it not that the *conspiration* of Interest was too potent for the *diversity* of Judgment. And sure 'twas a strange deference

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was given to it, when in the matter of *Indulgences*, there was (by the Testimony of their own Writers) four *different* Opinions, and yet all *Catholick*: which moderation towards *Speculative* dissenters, compar'd with the great severity against those that opposed its *Practice*, speaks loud enough that the *Orthodoxy* of the point, lay wholly in the *Profitableness*: and that *Luther* himself had been no *Heretick*, had he busied himself only in such disquisitions, as impeded not the *gain* of that Doctrine. Nor is this meerly surmise and conjecture, for if we consult the *memorials* of those transactions, we shall find *this* was the thing that most alarm'd *Rome*, put that Court in almost as great a *commotion* as the *birth* of Christ did *Herods*: and accordingly in their private consults, the closer *cabals* of the Colledge; the *securing* this part of their invaded treasure was the grand *deliberation*, upon which account it was, that when *Adrian* shewed some Inclination to the reforming abuses both in this and other instances, one of his *Cardinals* who better knew the entrigues of affairs, admonisht him against that unskilful piece of *Ingenuity*, not only from the Example of his *Predecessors*, who were resolute never to confess Faults by *mending* them, but by *representing* to him, "That no *reformation* "could be made, which would not notably di- "minish the *rents* of the Church, which having "four foundations, the one *Temporal*, the other "three *Spiritual*, Indulgencies, Dispensations, "and Collations of Benefices; no one of them

"could be stopped but that one quarter of the "revenues would be cut off. What a resemblance this advice carries to the oration of *Demetrius* to his fellow crafts-men, *Act.* 19. 25. I need not stand to demonstrate, but while such considerations as this, bear sway in Church matters, where *Profit* shall be the *Touch-stone* both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no *gainful Tenet* be deposited; or *Peace* bought with that which in most mens esteem is of far more value.

AND this is it which ominates sadly as to our divisions with the *Romanists*, were our *differences* meerly the product of Heat and Passion, they would like the *smaller clefts* in the ground, want nothing but a *cooler season* to cement and close them: but when they are thus form'd into an *interest*, become the Design not of *single persons* or *ages*, but of *corporations* and *successions*; the Breach seems like the *sciissures* and *ruptures* of an Earthquake, and threatens to swallow all that attempt to close it, and reserves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till *spiritual* and *secular* Concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to disguise the prepostrous subordination of the nobler to the inferior; till we have forgotten the unhappy *Chymistry* of turning *all* even *Religion* its self *into Gold*, we must never hope to get out of the *Furnace*; our *flames* will still grow fiercer, and with this unnatural *effect* to consume not the *Dross*, but the purer *Metal*. In

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a word, till men can sever themselves from their *Avarice* and mean pursuits of gain, they will never cease to seperate from their *brethren*. For as the most *soveraign Balsoms* cannot cure a hurt while the *arrow* remains in the flesh: so neither can the most *pacifick Remedies* at all avail, so long as the same *worldly Aims*, which made the wound, still stick in it.

BUT in the mean time 'tis a *Melancholick* consideration that Christianity should be by its Professors thus unworthily prostituted; that the many various and opposite Religions for which we severally pretend so much zeal, should be but divers waies to the same irreligious End; wherein our *Elders* seem to resemble those in the Story of *Susanna*, who when they meant to *part* with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulse of the same Lust. We find it moved the *patience* even of the *Lamb of God*, to see his Fathers *house* made a house of *merchandize*, though the Traffick was for the furnishing of Sacrifices: with what abhorrence must we think does he now behold those, who drive so much a worse trade in it: who sell not *accommodations* for worship, but the *worship* its self to accommodate their *interests*, and do not only make Gain *in* the Temple, but *of* it. A thing the sacrilegious Rapine of our days has made literally true, where besides the *revenues*, the very *fabrick* and *materials* of Churches, have been *marketable ware*: *Judas*'s good husbandry has been taken up, and *ad quid Perditio hæc?* put as the *common Motto*

upon every thing that could be sold for *more*, nay sometimes for *less* than *Three hundred pence*. And as *Dionysius* took away the golden beard from *Æsculapius*, to rectifie the indecency of the Sons having a beard when the Father had none: and *Julian* robb'd the Christian altars with this *impious Sarcasm*, ἐν ποίοις σκεύεσιν ὑπηρετεῖ ὁ Μαρίας υἱός; that *'twas unfit the Son of Mary should be serv'd in Plate*. So do men now a-days make themselves *regulators* of holy things, correct the *indecorums* of the sanctuary, that they may rifle its *treasures*. Thus do we see the Apostles affirmation sadly verified that *those who will be rich fall into Temptation, and a snare*, 1 Tim. 6. 9. Such is the greedinesse of a *covetous appetite*, that it swallows indiscriminately whatever looks like *prize*, and rather than it want its prey, God *Himself* shall be *robb'd*. Nay, 'twere to be wisht in this instance, that That were all; but alas he is *mockt* too, used not only *unjustly*, but *contumeliously*; we thus make him a property to our sordid designs, and when he has profest that he will not be serv'd together with *Mammon*, we attempt that which is yet far more blasphemous, and make him pay service to him with whom he disdains to share it when paid by others.

NEITHER is Covetousnes the only *Vice* that serves its interest upon Religion: but as 'tis made a *factor* for that, so is it a *cloak* and *disguise* for many other. Of this the Catalogues of primitive *Hereticks* give sufficient witness; divers whereof as the *Nicolaitans, Cerinthians, Carpocratians,*

tians and *Gnosticks* seem to have constituted distinct sects in *Christianity*, only that they might introduce the most bestial parts of *Heathenism*, and pretended an association in *Religion*, when indeed it was in *lust*. How far some of our modern Sects resemble them in this Particular, I will not undertake to pronounce: though there want not those who make *severe*, and not *improbable* Conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main design or no; 'tis certain both that wickedness, and many other find great shelter among them. He that brings *resolution* to uphold a Faction shall not miss of *Entertainment*, how many or how great vices soever he brings with it; and *he* that is of a *godly party*, shall in spight of the loudest Guilts be a *godly man*. So *meritorious* a thing is it in some mens account to be *factious*, that *it covers the multitude of sins*: hence it is that *Criminals* so frequently fly to new Churches for *Sanctuary*: and 'twill still be the concern of such to have so creditable a *Refuge*; and therefore we are not to wonder if *this* Interest combine with the *former* in promoting our Dissentions.

BUT alas, as it advances *those*, so does it our *guilt* too, that have more than on vile End to which we accommodate our Piety: and still implies the greater *affront* to our God, by how many the more and baser *interests* we shroud under his Patronage. Alas, is it not enough as *Job* speaks *to hide our iniquities in our own bosomes*, but must we wrap them in the *Veil* of the *Sanctuary*.

We read that *Goats* once lent a *covering* for the Tabernacle; but here by an impious Inversion, the *Tabernacle* must lend a *covering* to the Goats: The most *bestial appetites* be both concealed and preserv'd under the *Shadow* of Religion. *Plutarch* tells us that when *Marcellus* would have consecrated a *Temple* joyntly to Honour and Vertue, the *Priests* resisted it, saying, *Two Gods dwelt not in one Church*: and if their *vain deities* exacted such a solemnity of Respect, and would not be Inmates to *one another*, can we think the *true God* will be content to be made so to all our *vilest lusts*. This is sure the highest Contumely to the divine Majesty; and never could the *abomination of desolation* more properly be said to stand in the *holy place* than in *this sense*: for as the *natures* of these Guilts are fitly expresst by *abomination*, so is the *effect* of them by *desolation*; they having brought the most *fatal mischiefs* on the Church.

AND now would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would soberly ponder the weight of it, There are *two things* of which God has expresst himself peculiarly Tender, his *honour* and his *Church*; this is the invading him in both; the exposing the *one* to Reproach and Contempt, and the *other* to Ruine and Destruction; and doubtless were there nothing of the *former*, this *later* alone must be sadly accounted for. It remains yet a Character of infamy upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Israel* to enrich himself: and on *Balam* that *he not only loved the wages of iniquity*, but *ensnared*

ensnared the people in uncleanness: and sure the same with many aggravations belongs to those, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to *foreigners*, but made it so to *its self*; engag'd one part of it against another, till the whole is so wasted, that our *Religion* seems now neerer extinction, than our *quarrels* about it.

CHAP. XVI.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fourthly, Passion.

A FOURTH grand contributer to our dissentions is *Passion*, which being by God and nature placed in a subserviency to reason, when it quits its *proper station* and assumes *empire*, it must needs disorder and subvert not only the State of the *Mind*, but of *Every thing* upon which it has an Influence. I shall not here attempt any *Philosophical* discourse either of their *nature* or *number*; all that concerns the present enquiry falls under one of these two, our *love*, or our *hate*; and is either Kindness and Prepossession, or Spight and Prejudice: For the *first* of these 'tis a thing which *common experience* attests to be a most forcible corrupter of the understanding, which being by native right design'd a *Judge*, is by this interrupted in its *office*,

office, not permitted to make those impartial Enquiries, on which a right *sentence* should be founded. But (as it fares sometimes with *Magistrates* in Popular insurrections) forced to give countenance to its own *violation,* to own not its proper native dictates, but such as are presented to it, by the prejudicate Phancy. And as it thus lays restraint upon the *superior* part of the Mind, keeps the understanding in fetters, so (to complete the inversion) it takes off all ties from the *inferior*: Gives not only *licence,* but *incitation* to the other Passions to take their freest range, to act with the utmost impetuosity. And sure there can nothing more be requir'd, to render it a most apt *instrument* of Tumult and Confusion. For when every *opinion* that is taken up, shall instead of *reason* and *argument,* arm its self with *heat* and *violence,* there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too sadly discernible in our *Church-controversies,* which derive a great deal of their *warmth* and *bitterness* from this Fountain.

OF this prepossession there are two Sorts, the one relating to *Doctrine,* the other to *Persons*; by the first I mean not a sober constancy to those principles which being first imbibed by *education,* are afterwards retain'd upon *Judgment,* but an eager *tenacity* of Opinions, not so much upon *Truth* or *Evidence,* as upon a confus'd irrational *kindness*; a *Platonick love* of some Doctrine meerly for themselves, and then making them the *Standards,* by which all others are to be measured:

measured: And this kind of Prepossession is no Stranger in the world, there being multitudes of men, who assert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but because they like them: And as the wiser sort *chuse* a Tenet, because 'tis *right*, so these conclude 'tis *right*, because they have *chosen* it. And having thus enamour'd themselves of their *Helena*, they expect all should adore, nor can he scape the note of Profaneness that refuses. By this absurd partiality it is that some *doctrines*, which would themselves ill abide the *Test*, are become the *Touch-stone* both of Doctrines and Men, and no Opinion or Person sanctified which bears not this impress. I need not stand to give instances, either of the *Doctrines* or the unhappy *influence* this espousing of them has had on our dissentions; but indeed this kind of *Prepossession* is oftentimes the *consequent* of another; and this great *veneration* of some Opinions is founded in the *reverence* of their Authors. Men take up a confidence of the *learning* or *sanctity* of a Person, and then all his *notions* are received implicitly, strictly embraced, but not so much as slightly examin'd; and this *admiration* of mens Persons, has in all ages been of huge *mischief* to the Church, has nurst up *private* Phancies into solemn *publick* Errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many *Heterodox opinions*, which would else have expired with their *first Propugners*. This seems to have been foreseen by St. *Paul*, when he so earnestly exhorts the *Corinthians* against the ascribing

bing their *Faith,* to their several respective *Teachers*: But sure I am, 'twas sadly experimented by the *succeeding Christians,* who owed many of their *divisions* to it. A pregnant instance hereof was the *Millennium,* which in spight of its improbability prevail'd *long,* and almost *universally* against the *Truth* upon the strength of *Authority. Papias* a holy man and Scholar of St. *John,* having delivered it, the *esteem* of his Person canoniz'd his *mistake,* and men chose rather to admit a *doctrine,* whose unagreeableness to the Gospel Oeconomy rendred it suspicious, than think an *Apostolick man* could seduce them. And the force of this is yet more considerable, when 'tis remembred that it found *Proselytes,* not only among the *Vulgar,* who are commonly flexible to any new Impression, but among those of a *higher rank,* men that were *lights* in their generation: *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus* having own'd the *Opinion,* and intimated it to have been received by many others no less *Orthodox*; and if such a seduction could prevail, so early in those purer times, before mens interests or spleen were adopted into their Religion, and begot voluntary errors, if I say the *meer reputation* of a Teacher, was then singly so operative; we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with those *auxiliaries,* which worser times have brought in. What concurrence of those there was in the several *Heresies,* which after infested the *Church,* I shall not now examine, but 'tis visible that many of them grew considerable, chiefly from the *fame* of their Authors, thus *Tatianus* upon

on the credit of being *Justin Martyr's* disciple, had an advantage to disseminate his errors, and not only his, but those of *Origen Apollinaris* and *Novatus*, gain'd abettors from the *reputed Orthodoxy* of the Persons, that propos'd them, who having asserted the Faith in *some* points, were qualified the more prosperously to appose it in *others*.

NOR has it been only the mishap of elder times to have felt the mischiefs of such præpossession; the *disease* has still advanced, and every day improved in worse *effect*, by how much men have more degenerated from *primitive integrity*, so that the *easie Proselyte* is now in danger, not only from the *blindness*, but the *treachery* of his guide, and is often led out of the *common road*, as *thieves* draw passengers into *by-ways* for the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my present business to send *Hue and cry* after them, to examine what the intentions of those *leaders* are, who misguide their tractable admiring *followers*, 'tis enough for my purpose to observe, that those who so deliver up themselves in a blind assent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abused by him if he pleases: I shall leave it to others, to estimate the *probability* that they shall not be actually so: But certainly this may be said, that these *later* ages have beyond all the *former* given Opportunities of seducing to any that will use them. The one establisht Doctrine of *infallibility* among the *Romanists* is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of *submission* to something they call *Infallible*, 'tis evident that the

the *faith* of the ignorant Vulgar resolves its self into that which they acknowledge most *fallible*; the Doctrine of their immediate Teachers. But indeed take it at the best, such a *perswasion* is not only an *error* in its self, and an apt *foundation* for innumerable others, but it necessarily renders them incorrigible; the least retractation of a *mistake* being so inconsistent with the claim of *infallibility*, that while they retain the *one*, they must never attempt the *other*, nor can they cease to Erre, till they confess it possible they may do so. How much more than possible that has been, the many Innovations of that Church sufficiently witness; and consequently the danger of presuming upon the unerrableness of a guide. But would all that *upbraid* it there, were themselves *secure* from it, and that many did not in their practice transcribe that *decried doctrine*, and that too with the improvement of worse *circumstances*. I must call them *worse*, by how much the *probabilities* of Erring are *greater* under the extemporary conduct of a *Private person*, than the fixt rules of a *community*, and by how much again the voluntary enslaving my self is more excuseless, than that which the principles of my Profession, and consequently a seeming obligation of Conscience exposes me to. And as to the matter of Fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the *admiration* of mens Persons is a *spreading disease* that has overrun Christendom, and though a great part of it inveigh against *implicite faith*, yet if it be throughly scanned, 'twill appear 'tis rather the *object* than the

the *act* we differ about. He that vehemently opposes that homage to the *Conclave*, will yet tamely pay it to a *Classis*: and he that refuses it there, yields it to the Votes of a *Congregational Church*; or if he hold out against that too, yet chuses to himself some *private Teacher* on which to cast it: Like *Micah*, *Judg.* 16. *Makes him a Teraphim and a Priest too, for his private use*; and then confidently consults his *Oracle*, and has nothing to do but believe its *responses*. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more sadly ridiculous, is that the very Opposition to *one* Usurpation makes them deliver themselves up to *another*. How many when they have heard a *Preacher* rail fiercely at the *Pope*, have presently made him *theirs*, and supposing that Zeal an *indication of a safe guide*, have given him as *absolute a rule* of their Consciences, as that he exclaim'd against (perhaps Envied) elsewhere: And the like instances might be given among our other dissenting parties. And this has taught some Seducers a lucky artifice, made them observe to what opinions their Proselytes had the greatest aversion, and by complying with their *anger* so steal away their *love*, that they might after lead them to what they *pleas'd*, yea, perhaps to that which they so much *detested*: For there want not examples of some, who have by back ways been brought to those Opinions, which at first they most defied. What have been the *attempts* or *success* of the Emissaries of *Rome* this way, I shall not pronounce, though some (not improbably) speak them *great*.

FROM

FROM this blind and passionate *esteem* of several Teachers have flowed many *pernicious consequents*, particularly those distinct Appellations, which form *differences* into *Sects*, many of which expresly own *this original*, by bearing the names of their *first Authors*. I might here put them in mind, that they are *illegitimate persons*, whom our Law directs to write with an *alias*, and ask them, *whether the Church from their superinduced name, has not cause so to repute them.* But I am sure I may with the utmost seriousness say, that this *practice* is to the great *violation* of Christian unity, and *reproach* of Christian profession, which seems to be abandon'd and disown'd by us, who instead of denominating our selves from *the Author and finisher of our Faith*, find out *new Patrons*, as if we were asham'd of our *first Relation*. Alas, how is the title of *Christian*, which was so *glorious* to the *Primitive owners*, that they gladly bought the occasion of boasting it with Torments and Death, become so *despicable* to *us*, that every the obscurest name is courted to supplant it. Have any of our *Idolized readers* bought their Interest in us so dear as *Christ* has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their *dependants* than *his*? 'Tis the *Apostles* own argument, 1 *Cor.* 1. 13. when he refutes their factious entitling themselves to *Paul* and *Apollo*, &c. by asking them if *Paul* were crucified for them: And indeed he there says so much upon this point, that I need only refer the Reader thither to learn, either the *unreasonableness* of this Schismatical zeal for

for our several Teachers, or the *inevitable contentions* and *animosities* which spring from it; only let me observe, that every of his Arguments are more pressing upon *us*, than on the *Corinthians*; those taken from the unreasonableness sure are, by how much the *names* we so adore are less venerable than those of *Paul* and *Cephas* or *Apollo*, and those from the consequencies are so also. For those Teachers were industrious to *prevent*, whereas ours commonly are no less busie to *promote contentions* on their behalf, and so we are more ascertain'd never to want them.

BUT besides this *kinder* prepossession towards some mens persons, there is another of a different nature, a *sinister* one. I mean *prejudice* and *disgust*, and *this* has done no less harm in Ecclesiastical affairs than the *former*. Men take up *piques* and *displeasures* at others, and then every *opinion* of the disliked person must partake of his *fate*, and be engaged in the *quarrel*: Nor will those that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right: Nay, some have been so perversly *malicious*, that they have given up their *understandings* to their *spleen*, forsaken an Opinion themselves approved, only that they might find matter of contest with one they maligned. A memorable instance of this *Socrates* gives in his *Eccl. Hist.* in *Theophilus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, who having formerly attested the Orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a sudden indignation against *Dioscorus* and his brethren, who maintain'd the Tenet, he embraced the con-

trary Heresie of the *Anthropomorphites*, that so under the Colour of a difference in *faith*, he might the more advantageously pursue his *malice*; & the Effects of it were very Tragical, not only to *private persons* in Tumult and Blood-shed, but to the *Church* by reviving that Error, which was before near expiring, and might as *Socrates* affirms, have lain in the dust, had it not been thus awaken'd. And indeed in Church story scarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of those, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented Heresies and Schisms. Thus *Marcion* being denied the Communion of the *Roman* Church, having before by a *scandalous crime* been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himself by publishing his *detestable doctrine*: In like manner *Miletius* upon a displeasure at *Peter* Bishop of *Alexandria*, first separated from the *Church*, and after took part with the *Arians*: So also *Lucifer* incensed at *Eusebius* for not approving of his Electing *Paulus* to the See of *Antioch*, broke Communion, and gave both rise and denomination to a new *Sect*. The like is said of *Apollinaris*, that he was excited to the broaching his *Heresie* by his impatience of the Excommunication inflicted on him and his Father, by *Theodotus* Bishop of *Laodicea*; and several others might be given to the same purpose, out of the Records of those first Ages.

AND certainly the World seems not to have so much improved in *meekness* since, as that we should think the same *principle* is not still as *active*,

active, and if the Task were not more envious than hard, many recent instances might be given to Parallel the former, especially of such as having justly smarted *under* the stroke of *Ecclesiastical discipline*, have sought to revenge themselves both *on it* and *the inflicters*, by Factions and Tumults; so making the *publick* at once cloak the Infamy, and bear the charge of their *particular* rancors. But this is a Subject neither grateful nor necessary to be more distinctly spoken to. One may however in the general say, that where these private Animosities are any thing *violent*, they usually beat down all Consideration of *publick good*. *Historians* observe of *Themistocles*, that he always thwarted the Councils of *Aristides*, not that he thought it the Interest of the *Commonwealth*, but *his own*, to keep down the growing reputation of his Competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often transcrib'd, as well in *Ecclesiastick*, as in *Civil* Transactions: No *detriment* is thought so formidable to a malicious mind, as the *prosperity* of his Adversary; and publick Ruptures shall still be allowed to widen, till they swallow up the whole, rather than he will close with his Antagonist. The History of the *Scottish Church* gives an apposite Example of this, in a *ruling Presbyter*, who being by King *James* advis'd with about the readmitting Marques *Huntley*, and prest with the present exigencies of Church and State, which requir'd it, gave his *final answer* in these terms. *Well Sir, I see you resolve to take* Huntley *in favour, if you do, I will op-*

pose it, chuse whether you will lose him or me, for both you cannot have. Some may think the greatest propriety of this instance lies to shew the *insolence* of that Tribe towards *Majesty*; but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand also; and shews how light the greatest *publick concerns* are, when *malice* is the counterpoize: And indeed the *Naturalists* experiment, that *flame* will not mingle with *flame*, never justifies its self better than when applied to minds thus accended, which however they may *meet* in mutual flashes, can never *unite* and *incorporate*: The sadness of it is, that they should only conspire to *common vastation*, and make the Church its self a *burnt-offering*.

THUS fatal have our several sorts of prepossions been to our Religion, for as if that were the *common Enemy*, our most distant contrary Affections, our *love* and our *hate* equally annoy it; those brutish parts of us our *Passions*, which like the *beasts* under the Law, were never to be brought into the *Temple*, but for *sacrifice*, are *now* found there upon a far differing account, not to be *slain*, but *ador'd*; like the *Ægyptian Isis* and *Osyris*, enshrin'd to receive our *Devotions*, for that the Zeal we pretend elsewhere is really paid to them, is alas too manifest.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

A survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fifthly, Zeal.

TO these several causes of our distractions we my add another, which though in its *original* it may seem more *innocent*, yet is in its *consequents* no less *pernicious*, and that is a *mistaken Zeal*, which as it is *fire* to all about it, so is it *wind* to its self, fans and irritates its own *flames*, and by a confidence that it does *well*, gathers still fresh vigour to do *more*. How great the force of such an Erroneous perswasion is, we may collect from our Saviours premonition to his Disciples, when he tells them, that *those who kill'd them should think they did God service*; and if *Murder*, and that of *Apostles* too, could by the *Magick* of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other *Crimes* so too. And what *Christ* thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in St. *Paul*, whom the Holy Writ represents under all the Phrases that may denote a virulent *persecutor*, as breathing out *threatnings* and *slaughter*, making havock of the Church, and in his own words, *Persecuting that way unto the Death*, and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being Zealous towards God, and out of a *perswasion* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus*, as we find

in his *Apology* to his countrey-men and King *Agrippa*, Act. 22. 2. & 26. 9.

AND of the abettors of those Novel doctrines which after times produced, we have reason to think many were of this Sort, especially in those Heresies which though they carried *secret venome* in them had yet a *plausible appearance* of Sanctity and Devotion; such was that of the *Encratites*, which seem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great Vertues *Continence* and *Temperance*, though by extending them beyond the due limits, they lost that *Sobriety* they too strictly embraced, and became *inordinate* in their Continence, and *excessive* in their Abstinence: Such again were the *Euchitæ* or *Massalians*, who made the whole business not only of *religion* but even of *life* to consist *in praying*; and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the *letter* of a Precept, and the *pretence* of Devotion on their side, 'twas a *proper bait* for those who had *much* Zeal and *little* Knowledge. In like manner the *Novatians* Heresie had so glorious an inscription of Purity as was very apt to attract well meaning Souls; who seeing it bid such express *defiance to Apostacy*, could not suspect that it was its self any *defection from the faith*; and accordingly some of that Sect approved their constancy in times both of *Heathen* and *Arian* persecutions. Nor must we be so uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many, have acted upon the like Principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually promoted

promoted the contrary. But how ſincere ſoever the *purpoſes* of ſuch ſeduced Perſons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has ſuffer'd no leſs by *them*, than by the *more crafty deſigners*: their *miſguided piety* has made as great and incurable Ruptures, as the moſt *flagitious blaſphemies* of others. And when a *rent* is once made, it matters little whether it were done by *error* or *malice*; nay perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more deſperate: for whereas *he* that knowingly *commits* an Ill, has the *Upbraidings* of his own Conſcience towards his reducing; theſe on the other ſide have its *Cheriſhings* and *Encouragements*, to confirm and animate them. And doubtleſs they are great advantages which *Satan* has in all ages made of Such Perſons, whom he ſeems to have deluded in the ſame manner, that *Medea* is ſaid to have done the daughters of *Peleas*, whom ſhe perſwaded to hack their *aged Father* in pieces, in hope that by her *Magick*, he ſhould not only recover *life* but *youth*: ſo theſe rend and tear their *Mother* the Church out of a hope, no leſs deluſive, of reſtoring her *priſtine beauty* and *vigor*; how far the Event parallels it alſo, the dying ſtate of *Chriſtianity* does too ſadly teſtifie.

NOR has it only been the Heat of *Erring perſons* that has been thus miſchievous, but ſometimes *men of right judgments* have too much contributed to the breach of Unity, and the intemperate and imprudent *Zeal* of theſe hath ſerv'd to exaſperate the miſtaking *earneſtneſs* of the other:

this happens sometimes for want of distinguishing between the *Essentials* and *Circumstantials* of Religion, and so looking upon a mistake in the *later* with the detestation proper only to the perverting of the *former*; by this means those who have entirely embraced the same *faith*, have yet violated *charity* and broken *communion*: such slight *minute differences* when managed by eager Spirits being easily blown up into solemn and *lasting contentions*; so that the Disputes rais'd about some *pin* or *nail* of the Temple, have sometimes shaken and endanger'd the *whole Fabrick*, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its fastest cement, and surest support. Of this we need no more apt instance from antiquity than that which has been already mentioned upon another occasion, I mean *Victors* unbrother-like Heat towards the Eastern Churches in the *controversie* about *Easter*, which had fomented that Difference into a Schism, which the meeker Piety of his Predecessors thought no ground of *unkindness*, much less of *Separation*, as *Irenæus* more at large tells him; And probably had men in all the succeeding Ages deliberately *poiz'd* the Errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their Displeasure but to the *just weight* of them, many of our *disputes* would have been so calm'd, that they should never have become *quarrels*. But many in this particular have only us'd the *Touchstone*, not the *Scales*: and of Opinions that are erroneous, consider not which are more or less pernicious, but with an equal violence fly at all, as

if

if the *Stoical* opinion concerning *Sins* had prevail'd in *Errors* also, and that all were resolv'd to be of the same size.

BUT even in those of the highest kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether *too eager an opposition* have not sometimes done *hurt*, especially in those Doctrines which relate to the *mysterious parts* of Religion, wherein a *novelty* is at first lookt upon with some horror, and many are willing rather to *condemn* in gross than nicely to *examine*: Who yet when they find this done for them by *Orthodox persons*, they think they may with such a guide venture to wade into the question, where many times the *insinuations* of Error are so subtile, that all their *Antidotes* secure them not from *infection*, but they are themselves *captivated* where they expected only to *triumph*. Neither want there those of the *Vulgar* that are of a more *insolent temper*; and out of a vanity of making themselves *Umpires* between learned men, greedily read the writings of both Parties, who yet are able to make no *solid judgment* of either; and when 'tis remembred how many *popular artifices* there are to byasse such persons, we must confess that *Truth* hath many to one, *Odds* against her: Besides, *publick arguing* oft serves not only to exasperate the *minds*, but to whet the *Wits* of *Hereticks*, and by shewing them the *weak parts* of their Doctrines, prompts them to rally all their *Sophistry* to fortifie them, that what they want of *truth* and *reason*, may be supplied with *fallacy* and little colours; and Experience shews how fitly that

that kind of *Logick* is accommodated to the greatest part of the World. In short it seems not improbable, that many Heresies owe much of their *growth* to the improper means of *eradicating* them: and have acquir'd a *reputation* from the *stir* that was made about them. Thus *Socrates* tells us that *Alexanders* letters about the *Arian* Heresie serv'd to scatter that pestilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd men into parties, so that the whole *world* became the *Scene* of that long Tragœdy, which possibly might have had a shorter and better *issue*, had not the notice of the Controversie been so early dispersst.

BUT if the Attempts of the *Pen* have often proved so unfit, it may be consider'd whether those of the *sword* are not more so, and *fighting* be not a worse expedient than *disputing*: and certainly we have great reason to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the Injustice, or Unreasonableness of it. I know there want not those who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms not only *lawful* but *meritorious*, and that in order to the *planting* it in a Nation, the *soil* may be mellowed with the *bloud* of the Inhabitants; nay the *old* extirpated, and *new* Colonies planted. But we are to remember that as God is the *universal Monarch* of the World, so We have all the relation of *fellow subjects* to him, and can pretend no farther jurisdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us; and sure 'twould be hard to produce any commission

miſſion from him for the invading a Nation only becauſe 'tis not of our Faith. 'Tis ſure, *thoſe* to whom he firſt entruſted the promulgating of the Goſpel had far *different inſtructions*, and 'twere fit our *new Evangeliſts* ſhould ſhew their *later authority* for this ſanguinary Method, in order to which though ſome have made uſe of the *Opinion* of ſome Schoolmen that *dominion is founded in Grace*, yet as that is but an Opinion, ſo were it admitted as the moſt certain Truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind, for ſuppoſing that a people by wanting *ſpiritual* Bleſſings did loſe all their right to *temporal*, yet that Forfeiture muſt devolve only to the Supreme Lord, and when as God in another caſe asks, where is the *bill of divorce*? Eſay 50. 1. ſo we may demand of theſe zealous Invaders, where is the *bill of aſſignment*, by which that right was transferr'd to them? In ſhort, *peace* is the moſt valuable bleſſing of humane life, and we cannot without injuſtice deprive man of it, though we could as we pretend, give them *truth* in lieu of it; for maugre the *Proverb*, that *Exchange will ſtill be robbery*, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas, 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd: or that we can bind the *underſtandings* and *wills* of men, with the ſame fetters we do their *bodies*; 'tis true indeed the Apoſtle tells us *there is a way of bringing every thought into Captivity to the obedience of Chriſt*, but he tells us withall that the *weapons*, by which that Victory is atchieved, *are*

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not carnal, 2 *Cor.* 10. 4. Indeed did Religion consist only in some external *conformities,* external *force* might bear some proportion to it (which perhaps is the cause that the one is most us'd by those whose religion is most eminent for the other) but 'tis seated in those *faculties* to which *outward violence* can have no access. Alas, 'tis not whole Armies can besiege my *reason,* nor Canons batter my *will,* 'tis *conviction* not *force,* that must induce Assent; and sure the *Logick* of a conquering Sword has no great propriety that way; *Silence* indeed it may, but *convince* it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other side, breeds aversion and abhorrence of that Religion, whose first address is in bloud and rapine: nor do such *attempts* gain any thing to the Cause but the *infamy* of those rigors which are us'd to promote it. And sure since this piece of *Mahumetan* Zeal has been transplanted into *Christendom,* it has been much more mischievous than in its native soil. Christianity having been infinitely more oppressed by those that thus fought *for* it, than those that were in Arms *against* it. Whether upon this score the *Pope* have not done her more harm than the *Turk,* I leave to consideration.

BUT what is here said of the *military* Sword, I intend not should be applied to the *Civil*; for I treat not here of those legal punishments, which *Magistrates* inflict upon their disobedient Subjects; who indeed may *justly,* nay indeed must *necessarily* require Conformity to *Ecclesiastical* laws, as

as well as the *Civil*: the Eruptions in the *one* commonly overflowing the *other* also, and *Schism* usually ending in *Rebellion*; so that 'tis apparently their interest to guard themselves from those riotous effects of pretended zeal, nor is it less their duty, they being as the Ancients express it, *Custodes utriusque tabulæ* in S. *Paul's* language, *the ministers of God*, Rom. 13. and in *Constantines* dialect Ἐπίσκοποι τῆς τὰ ἔξω, *Bishops in the whole outward administration of the Church*, and if Heresie or Schism be a *sin*, are by their places obliged to approve themselves *avengers*; to execute wrath no less there, than in other circumstances: And that they are sins and of no small bulk; none can doubt that observes *Heresie* ranked, *Gal.* 5. with *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, murders*, and other sins of the flesh; or *Schism*, markt out by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, as a kind of *petrifying crime*, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is consequent, for so we find, *Heb.* 10. 26. that *forsaking the assemblies* is lookt on as previous to *Apostacy* and final defection: And therefore sure the Magistrate can do nothing kinder even to the Offenders than by taking their sin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But that his just power thus rescued I may assume my former assertion, and conclude, that all other Violences are so far from *advancing* Christianity, that they extremely *weaken* and *disadvantage* it.

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BUT of no sort is this more eminently true than of those *popular heats*, where the People undertakes to chastise *error*: for besides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert men even from truths which they see so barbarously defended, it often happens that the *multitude* take *causeless alarms*, and think their Faith is invaded when it is not. A memorable instance of this kind *Euagrius* gives in his Eccl. History, where he tells us that the Emperor *Anastatius* having added to the *Trisagium* this Clause, *Who was crucified for our Salvation*, the whole City of *Constantinople* was in an uproar, upon an ignorant jealousie that those words had some Heretical meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor silly *Monk*, they immediately kill him as the *Inventor* of that clause, and a *conspirer* against the Trinity: So unhappily absur'd are the Transports of *wild zeal*, which where it rules, does besides the *direct mischiefs* of Tumult and Sedition create *others* at the rebound, which are more permanent, and discompose and embitter mens spirits, and render them so ambitiously *greedy* of *quarrels* for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to *receive* but to *seek* Encounters: and 'tis too sure they can never be wanting to persons of such tempers, since the *adversaries* of Truth cannot have more *advantage* or Encouragement against it, than this *unpeaceful humor* of those that profess it.

BY these several waies has it come to pass, that even that *zeal* which should be the *life* of Christianity,

Christianity, is become its disease; and *Religion* like a *Hectick body* is consum'd by its own *heats*, if at least I may call those its own, which derive not from its proper and native constitution; but are the accidents of its declining state: for how confidently soever men pronounce of themselves, and believe that they are then most *pious*, when they are most *eager* and *unquiet*; yet 'tis sure this is far removed from the true genius and temper of *religion*, which like the *God* it worships, makes its approaches not in *winds* and *Earthquakes*, but in the *still small voice*, 1 Kings 19. 12. and when 'tis consider'd, that the greatest part of the Evangelical Law is made up of *precepts* of Meekness, Long-suffering, and Condescention; we must conclude that *zeal* very *preposterous*, that pretends to obey by *violating* them; or to establish Religion by *undermining* the most essential parts of it: and to Persons under that mistake, we may most properly apply the *reproof* given by Christ to his Disciples upon the same occasion, *you know not, what manner of Spirit you are of.*

IT will therefore become men to look with *Jealousie* on themselves in this particular; not too confidently to *pursue* every Incitation which carries a shew of Piety; but soberly to *weigh* how it agrees with the Rules and Oeconomy of that Gospel for which it pretends so much concern; for though the *true Christian Zeal* can never be too much cherished; yet alas 'tis not *every warmth* we feel about Religion that can

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own *that Title*; and sure we do not more often, or more fatally mistake any thing than in applying that venerable *name* to things of a far *inferior*, nay sometimes of a *contrary* nature. How often upon this Error, have men ascrib'd that to their *piety* which they owed to their *complexions*, and thought 'twas their *religion* made them Earnest, when 'twas meerly their *constitution*: Nay, how often has *Satan* taken this advantage of transforming himself into an *Angel of light*, and insinuating his illusions under this disguise. And truly they must still be liable to both these deceits, so long as they place the *essence* of Christian zeal in *heat* and *eagerness*. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats, but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of *Love*, not of *Anger*; to melt, not consume our Enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our *own bloud* a Sacrifice to Truth than *that of gain-sayers*. In short, if it be a Fire, 'tis that *pure Elemental* which the *Peripateticks* talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to *cherish*, not *devour*.

AND would God men would so far believe this, as to think there may be *moderation*, without the danger of *Laodicean luke-warmness*, and upon that supposition suffer themselves to cool into a treatable Temper, and then I should humbly offer to them these few Considerations.

FIRST the great and universal *fallibility* of humane Nature, which renders it not only possible that we *may*, but certain that every one of

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us *shall* erre in something or other; and this sure is very proper to perswade lenity to those whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apostles* argument in the case of Sin, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiseration and Gentleness towards the Offenders; and if this be of force *in sin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the person more inexcusable, it will surely hold much more in *bare Error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is so) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *disease* than *crime* of the Person: and since we use not to exclaim against men for being *sick*, but compassionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why should we here use so much a *contrary method*. 'Tis true indeed, 'tis necessary sometimes in order to the *Cure*, and sometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do some things *uneasie* to the Patient; and what tends regularly to either of these Ends, may in this case also be Charitably done, by those that have Authority: but *that* differs as far from our usual *severities*, as the *lancings* of a Physician do from the *wounds* of an Adversary; or *publick* Discipline from *private* Spleen. So that notwithstanding this, we may resume our *conclusion* and infer from the *Errableness* of our Nature, the *reasonableness of compassion* to the seduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently*

upon others, so also to reflect *impartially* upon our selves; and consider how possible it is, that even whilest we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong; and then all the Invectives we make at their *supposed* Errors; fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this possibility were but adverted to, it would make us less positive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention; for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we esteem them *otherwise*; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falshoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all those cases, where we have not some *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgment* to build it on.

AS for those who have the *surest grounds* of Perswasion, and by their security of being themselves in the Truth, have the more *reason* to be earnest in propagating it to others: let them in the second place consider how necessary 'tis to chuse *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themselves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *Moral*, but *Christian* Vertue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superstition, Liberality into Profuseness, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrensie. And of Persons so possest, God may say as *Achish* did of *David*, 1 Sam. 21. 15. *have I need of mad men?*

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no ſure, the *defence of Truth* is too *noble a cauſe* to be ſo managed; its *Champions* are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can firſt ſnatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to conſult the propereſt expedients, uſe not only *force* but *Stratagem* againſt the Enemy, and yet withall to take care that while they *oppoſe* one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand *Adverſary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by ſubverting the *faith* of ſome, he ſhipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *End*, and triumphs at once both over the *ſpeculative* and *practick* part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther conſideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on thoſe who either out of a blind, or raſh zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the Miſcarriages of *ſincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our ſelves than he deſigns us, and preſume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent ſoever a good purpoſe may make our *Error*, yet 'tis a priviledge beyond all poſſibility of grant, that our *ſins* ſhould be ſo alſo; therefore if our Miſperſwaſions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed S. *Paul* alledges his *ignorance*, as the Cauſe of his finding *mercy*, for his perſecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *abſolution*, but *converſion*; and had

he resisted the *later*, though with never so full a perswasion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have secur'd him the *former*; so that all the *Encouragement*, that Example can afford it, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *Erring* than a *malicious* Persecutor: And when 'tis considered that all the odds that Christ makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and *ignorantly*, is in the *number* of Stripes: we must resolve our *mistakes* are no such *Amulets* as totally to secure us. And then whether our *guilts* shall not swell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a question that sure can never be resolved in the negative: for if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of Sin, sure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two Persons equally mistaken, the *Murder* of the one, shall not be a greater Crime than an *intemperate speech* of the other. And upon this measure the accounts of erring zeal are like to rise very high with many; unless we can think Rebellion and Bloudshed, Sacriledge and Schism, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate *these*, or any *other*, Crimes, though they should happen to be committed in the *defence of Truth*: Of this St. *Peter* is a ready instance, who when to *guard* Him, who was Truth its self, he had *violated* the Authority of the Magistrate in *wounding* an Officer: Christ reprehends his rashness, and instead of applauding

plauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *absurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* considerable to him, who could command *Legions of Angels* to his rescue. And sure he is not so much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *Sins* to secure any of his *concerns*; and if St. *Peter* were thus check'd for *using* that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to *buy*, it must sure set an ill Character upon those *tumultuous reformations* which have so much employed the *zeal* of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of several great *sins*, the *guilt* whereof will scarce be wiped off, by their design'd *subserviency* to Truth; what Degree of *extenuation* it may afford is hard to pronounce, since we have no *rule* to measure it by. But whatsoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to such a Zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *Passions* or *Interests*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be necessary to *Examine*, whether no sinister Adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpose to which alone it can (even by their own award and sentence) appertain.

I HAVE insisted the more on *this*, because many are apt to ascribe too unlimitedly to the Force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever Commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their *Antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadliest poisons*. To such the foregoing considerations may be use-

ful; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* Security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purposes* the Director of good *actions*, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look consonant to its self, which now groans under the reproach of all those Ills, that are acted under his Patronage; and sure to rescue her from such a *scandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compassion*: Yet would God she might obtain it even from *those* who professs themselves her greatest *Votaries*: But alas, 'tis one sad circumstance of her ruine, that she owes it to such; that those Weapons which should *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her Bowels, and *zeal* should do her more mischief than *prophaneness*; for while she is but scoffed at by *that*, she is wounded by *this*: nor are those *wounds* ever like to close, till our Zeal grow more *balsamick*, partake of those *healing qualities* of Love and Meekness, the Want whereof has rendred it so unhappily instrumental to our Distractions.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

A ſurvey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Sixthly, Idleneſs.

BUT as *this over-active* humour has done abundant Miſchief to the Church, ſo is it obſervable, that the *direct contrary* has done as much, nay, which is yet ſtranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *buſie zeal*, ſprings from our too *great Idleneſs*. How much ſoever this may ſound like *Paradox*, yet both *reaſon* and *experience* atteſt the Truth of it; for we are to conſider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impoſſible ſo to ſuppreſs, as that there ſhall be a total ceſſation from *motion*: And therefore every intermitting of ſober, regular actings, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is ſaid ſo vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would forſake their ſpecifick motions to prevent it. So when the *mind* is Empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *ſpeculation* to Entertain it, every the moſt improper and preternatural *Object* offers its ſelf, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This ſeems to have been well underſtood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Iſraelites* propoſal of Travelling into the Wilderneſs to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too great lei-

sure at home; and therefore encreases their *tasks* as the propereſt way of diverting their *design*: And in like manner we find those that treat of *Politicks*, insist upon the necessity of keeping the *People busie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the use of *Mathematicks* and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the *active spirits* of a Nation, in demonstrating of *Problemes*, solving *Phænomenas*, and drawing *Schemes* and *Diagrams*, who else would be practising upon the *Government*, making new *Ideas* and Platforms for the *Common-wealth*: And doubtless there is parity of reason in the Ecclesiastick State, which would have been at *more peace*, had some men found themselves *other diversions*.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and observation of Event, for if we look into the Primitive times, we shall find that when there was a necessity of defending the *common faith* against *Heathenism*, when Christians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of these *intestine debates* (at least such as were *Metaphysical* and purely National) they had their hands full of the *foreign Enemy*, and had the less temptation to jangle among *themselves*. So also when they were under the greatest storms of persecution, when the Church was most violently assaulted from *without*, it had the greatest Calm *within*. They were then incessantly employed, and busied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Those cloudy days made them keep close at home waiting for the Bride-

Bridegrooms coming, and ſuffer'd them not to wander abroad for thoſe unprofitable Curioſities, which though like *Oil* they might nouriſh *flame*, yet would never furniſh their *Lamps*, or gain them admiſſion to the wedding but in the intervals, and eſpecially after the total ceſſation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their *Vigilance*, than while they ſlept, the Envious man had advantage to ſow his *Tares*. Reſt made them *idle*, Idleneſs made them *curious*, and Curioſity *contentious*; and thoſe who under the Tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony under the gentle pious regiment of a *Conſtantine*, grew to the greateſt diſcord, and perhaps (beſides the Divine and extraordinary ſupports the Church had in her greateſt *conflicts*) this may be one of the beſt natural *accounts*, how ſhe came to flouriſh moſt under her heavieſt *preſſures*.

BUT our obſervation ends not here, for beſides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which perſecuting times occaſion'd, Chriſtianity is in its frame and conſtitution an *active State*, has its ſtanding buſineſs, and beſides all *accidental*, a Series of *determinate, conſtant employments*, ſufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is throughly adverted to, there will be few *chaſms* of Time to be filled with *foreign impertinences*. And this gives a clear account how our *diviſions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of *practick duties*, for as every age degenerated more from

from *Primitive piety*, so they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, so that of *dispute* gathered heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far our *good works* fall short of the first Christians, we need not wonder to see our *controversies* so far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diversion* of Christian Practice among the *effects* of our Contentions, and foresee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cause* also: But alas, its concern in them is so extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream, and like a *circle* unites in *its self* Beginning and End: For as it first gave *birth* to our quarrels, so it finally receives *encrease* from them. In short, our oscitant *lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again, for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Christianity has been thus pernicious, so have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find St. *Paul* takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deserted their own *Ecclesiastical* Office, grew *busie-bodies* in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth invert the note, and observe that *those*, who either desert or neglect their *Secular* Callings, are the most perniciously *medling* in Ecclesiastick matters. Did men conscientiously employ

ploy themselves in their *honest occupations*, their Minds would be sufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or discipline; Divinity would not then pass the *Yard* and *Loom*, the *Forge* and *Anvil*, nor Preaching be taken in as an easier supplementary *Trade*, by those that disliked the *pains* of their own. But all this alas we have seen to the equal shame and detriment of Piety. *Mechanicks* of all sorts have presum'd to *teach* what themselves never *learnt*; and those that serv'd long *Apprentiships* to other Crafts, have become *Divines* in a moment, and with the same æmulous industry wherewith they us'd to invent new *fashions*, have made new *Religions*. And as Idleness has thus made some *Preachers*, so it has made more *hearers*, those who either by the *easiness* of their Callings, or their slight managery of them, have had the most *vacant time*, have been the aptest to run after *new teachers*: Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great *nurseries of faction*, the *leisure* of Shop-men making them more *inquisitive* after, and *receptive* of Novelties. And were that *over-grown zeal* of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that sort of men throughly scanned, we should find Idleness goes very far in its *composition*, for besides that Hearing is the most *lazy* of all religious Offices, as appears by the *undisturb'd sleeps* men can take at Sermons; it is manifest this insatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not *having* business,

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or not *attending* to it. For should I ask such men, whether if necessity had enforc'd St. *Pauls* rule upon them, that without their *labour* they should not *eat*, they would have spent their whole week at *Lectures*, and trusted to be fed by the *Ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with so exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the issue it sometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching Ears* forget the rest of the *body*, whilest to gratifie *them*, they totally neglect all care of their *Secular concerns*, and bring Themselves and Families to want and beggary.

NOR is it only this *one rank* of Persons whom Idleness has betrayed to faction, *Servants* we have frequently seen under the same Seducement, while either having but *little work*, or but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to listen after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirst after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, spend their *time*, which by compact is their Masters (and can with no more justice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who instruct them so in their Christian *liberty*, that they bring them to defie all *subjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man Master upon *Earth*, that they are to own no King nor Priest but *Christ*; teach them to contemn all Authority, *Domestick*, *Civil* or *Ecclesiastick*.

IF we look farther into *families*, we shall find also that many of our She-zealots become so upon the very same ground, when *Women* neglect that

that which St. *Paul* aſſigns them as their proper Buſineſs, *the guiding of the houſe*, their Zeal is at once the *product* and *excuſe* of their Idleneſs; and in ſpight of the *ill Character* the Wiſe-man has ſet on her, *whoſe feet abide not in her houſe*, *Prov.* 7. 11. it becomes the *mark* of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though theſe feminine Irregularities may ſeem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary; it having been the *unhappy priviledge* of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother *Eve*) to be able to do great and important *miſchiefs*; and doubtleſs many *men* may give the ſame account of their Schiſm and Sedition, that *Adam* did of his firſt ſin, *The woman that thou gaveſt me*, &c. This has always been well underſtood by *Seducers*, who have found it the moſt compendious way to their deſigns, *to lead captive ſilly women*, and make them the *Duck-coys* to their whole Family: But even thoſe who have miſt of this influence over the *minds* of their Husbands, have yet had it over their *Purſes*, and out of them ſupported the *Rabbies* of the Faction; who in gratitude to thoſe wiſe *Abigails* give their Husbands the *title*, and perhaps wiſh them the fate of *Nabal*. And God knows, how many men have thus been made contributers to the *cauſe* they have moſt deteſted, maintain'd that *fire* which thoſe *incendiaries* have kindled in the Holy place; *Money* being no leſs the *ſinews* of Eccleſiaſtical than Secular *War*.

THUS we ſee how the *Idleneſs* even of the moſt

most inconsiderable persons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the Church, which like a *Clock* or *Watch* may be disorder'd by the *rust* of the least *Pin*; how much more then, by that of the *main wheels* and *springs*; if Negligence in *lay-callings* have though but an oblique, yet so inauspicious an Influence, the like Neglect in *Ecclesiastick* must needs have a worse, because more immediate and direct. And would to God we could say this had been wanting to the compleating the mischief: But alas, many of those who are called to labour in the *Lords Vineyard*, seem to have forgot their Errand, and stand there all the day *Idle* (a much worse sight than to have seen them so only in the *Market-place*;) so that I fear there is too evident ground of saying, that the *slight execution* of the Pastoral Office, has been *one* of the most eminent Contributors to our distractions. And among *all the parts* of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciously neglected than that of *Catechizing*; the want whereof has left People so unbottom'd, that like a *house* built on the *sand*, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profest, but understood not. This is that which has made so many *unstable Souls*, as St. *Peter* observes, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14. to be the proper prey of Deceivers. And God knows, we may from sad experiment confirm the note. I wish the same *negligence* do not again evidence its self by the same *effects*: But besides this, which is part of the *Publick* Ministry, (and deservedly is so, being useful

uſeful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are *private* Intercourſes between Paſtor and People which are of *great uſe*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* Shepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common Paſture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertent Eye obſerve the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their ſingle *ſtrayings* and *diſeaſes*, and accordingly applies himſelf to reduce or cure them, and ſurely the like care is full as neceſſary in the *ſpiritual* Shepherd, 'tis not the *counſel* which is promiſcuouſly diſpenced in a Sermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is leaſt proper for him) that will do the *buſineſs*: Converts come not in now as in St. *Peters* days, in throngs and ſhoals, a more diſtinct and particular application is now neceſſary; men muſt be treated with apart, their particular *wants* diſcern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *inſtructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis theſe appropriate *Medicines*, that are like to make *ſound flocks*. Had Miniſters generally beſtowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have fruſtrated the *attempts* of Seducers, who could not ſo eaſily have inſinuated themſelves into the people, had they found them thus prepoſſeſt: but while theſe with all the arts of a ſubtile *induſtry* infuſe their *poyſons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in adminiſtring *Antidotes*, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I ſhall leave to the Conſciences of concern'd

concern'd persons to determine. But besides the *ill influence* the Pastors negligence has on the *People,* it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leisure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *speculative persons,* to the study of those *curious questions,* which are the great *disturbers* of our Peace; and of those that study them so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fomented by it: whereas were the *practical business* of their Charge throughly attended, the *remainder of time* would not be more than the *study* of the more solid, useful parts of Divinity would exact, and consequently there would no *surplus* be left for those *dangerous impertinencies, which* as the Apostle says, *serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers,* 2 Tim. 2. 14. But when our Watchmen *sleep,* 'tis no marvail if they *dream* too, and entertain themselves and others with those *Phantastick notions,* which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of *weight* and *reality,* besides the Mischiefs they wrought.

AND indeed if we scan the *volumes* of those vain Speculations, we shall have cause to conclude that Idleness has *created* as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: and that not only the extemporary *Chimœra's of Phanaticks,* but the more elaborate *nicities of the Schools,* have been thus derived: we know *Air* possesses no *place,* where it first finds not a *vacuity,* nor could those lighter *notions,*

us *shall* erre in something or other; and this sure is very proper to perswade lenity to those whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apostles* argument in the case of Sin, *Gal.* 6. 1. *Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, you which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiseration and Gentleness towards the Offenders; and if this be of force *in sin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the person more inexcusable, it will surely hold much more in *bare Error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is so) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *disease* than *crime* of the Person: and since we use not to exclaim against men for being *sick*, but compassionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why should we here use so much a *contrary method*. 'Tis true indeed, 'tis necessary sometimes in order to the *Cure*, and sometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do some things *uneasie* to the Patient; and what tends regularly to either of these Ends, may in this case also be Charitably done, by those that have Authority: but *that* differs as far from our usual *severities*, as the *lancings* of a Physician do from the *wounds* of an Adversary; or *publick* Discipline from *private* Spleen. So that notwithstanding this, we may resume our *conclusion* and infer from the *Errableness* of our Nature, the *reasonableness of compassion* to the seduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently*

upon others, so also to reflect *impartially* upon our selves; and consider how possible it is, that even whilest we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong; and then all the Invectives we make at their *supposed* Errors; fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this possibility were but adverted to, it would make us less positive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention; for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we esteem them *otherwise*; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falshoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all those cases, where we have not some *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgment* to build it on.

AS for those who have the *surest grounds* of Perswasion, and by their security of being themselves in the Truth, have the more *reason* to be earnest in propagating it to others: let them in the second place consider how necessary 'tis to chuse *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themselves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *Moral*, but *Christian* Vertue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superstition, Liberality into Profuseness, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrensie. And of Persons so possest, God may say as *Achish* did of *David*, 1 Sam. 21. 15. *have I need of mad men?*

no

no ſure, the *defence of Truth* is too *noble a cauſe* to be ſo managed; its *Champions* are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can firſt ſnatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to conſult the propereſt expedients, uſe not only *force* but *Stratagem* againſt the Enemy, and yet withall to take care that while they *oppoſe* one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand *Adverſary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by ſubverting the *faith* of ſome, he ſhipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *End*, and triumphs at once both over the *ſpeculative* and *practick* part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther conſideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on thoſe who either out of a blind, or raſh zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the Miſcarriages of *ſincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our ſelves than he deſigns us, and preſume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent ſoever a good purpoſe may make our *Error*, yet 'tis a priviledge beyond all poſſibility of grant, that our *ſins* ſhould be ſo alſo; therefore if our Miſperſwaſions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed S. *Paul* alledges his *ignorance*, as the Cauſe of his finding *mercy*, for his perſecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *abſolution*, but *converſion*; and had

he resisted the *later*, though with never so full a perswasion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have secur'd him the *former*; so that all the *Encouragement*, that Example can afford it, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *Erring* than a *malicious* Persecutor: And when 'tis considered that all the odds that Christ makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and *ignorantly*, is in the *number* of Stripes: we must resolve our *mistakes* are no such *Amulets* as totally to secure us. And then whether our *guilts* shall not swell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a question that sure can never be resolved in the negative: for if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of Sin, sure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two Persons equally mistaken, the *Murder* of the one, shall not be a greater Crime than an *intemperate speech* of the other. And upon this measure the accounts of erring zeal are like to rise very high with many; unless we can think Rebellion and Bloudshed, Sacriledge and Schism, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate *these*, or any *other*, Crimes, though they should happen to be committed in the *defence of Truth*: Of this St. *Peter* is a ready instance, who when to *guard* Him, who was Truth its self, he had *violated* the Authority of the Magistrate in *wounding* an Officer: Christ reprehends his rashness, and instead of applauding

plauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *absurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* considerable to him, who could command *Legions of Angels* to his rescue. And sure he is not so much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *Sins* to secure any of his *concerns*; and if St. *Peter* were thus check'd for *using* that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to *buy*, it must sure set an ill Character upon those *tumultuous reformations* which have so much employed the *zeal* of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of several great *sins*, the *guilt* whereof will scarce be wiped off, by their design'd *subserviency* to Truth; what Degree of *extenuation* it may afford is hard to pronounce, since we have no *rule* to measure it by. But whatsoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to such a Zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *Passions* or *Interests*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be necessary to *Examine*, whether no sinister Adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpose to which alone it can (even by their own award and sentence) appertain.

I HAVE insisted the more on *this*, because many are apt to ascribe too unlimitedly to the Force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever Commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their *Antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadliest poisons*. To such the foregoing considerations may be use-

ful; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* Security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purposes* the Director of good *actions*, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look consonant to its self, which now groans under the reproach of all those Ills, that are acted under his Patronage; and sure to rescue her from such a *scandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compassion*: Yet would God she might obtain it even from *those* who profess themselves her greatest *Votaries*: But alas, 'tis one sad circumstance of her ruine, that she owes it to such; that those Weapons which should *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her Bowels, and *zeal* should do her more mischief than *prophaneness*; for while she is but scoffed at by *that*, she is wounded by *this*: nor are those *wounds* ever like to close, till our Zeal grow more *balsamick*, partake of those *healing qualities* of Love and Meekness, the Want whereof has rendred it so unhappily instrumental to our Distractions.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

A ſurvey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Sixthly, Idleneſs.

BUT as *this over-active* humour has done abundant Miſchief to the Church, ſo is it obſervable, that the *direct contrary* has done as much, nay, which is yet ſtranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *buſie zeal*, ſprings from our too *great Idleneſs*. How much ſoever this may ſound like *Paradox*, yet both *reaſon* and *experience* atteſt the Truth of it; for we are to conſider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impoſſible ſo to ſuppreſs, as that there ſhall be a total ceſſation from *motion*: And therefore every intermitting of ſober, regular actings, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is ſaid ſo vehemently to abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would forſake their ſpecifick motions to prevent it. So when the *mind* is Empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *ſpeculation* to Entertain it, every the moſt improper and preternatural *Object* offers its ſelf, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This ſeems to have been well underſtood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Iſraelites* propoſal of Travelling into the Wilderneſs to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too great lei-

sure at home; and therefore encreases their *tasks* as the propereſt way of diverting their *design*: And in like manner we find thoſe that treat of *Politicks*, inſiſt upon the neceſſity of keeping the *People buſie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the uſe of *Mathematicks* and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the *active ſpirits* of a Nation, in demonſtrating of *Problemes*, ſolving *Phænomenas*, and drawing *Schemes* and *Diagrams*, who elſe would be practiſing upon the *Government*, making new *Ideas* and Platforms for the *Common-wealth*: And doubtleſs there is parity of reaſon in the Eccleſiaſtick State, which would have been at *more peace*, had ſome men found themſelves *other diverſions*.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and obſervation of Event, for if we look into the Primitive times, we ſhall find that when there was a neceſſity of defending the *common faith* againſt *Heatheniſm*, when Chriſtians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of theſe *inteſtine debates* (at leaſt ſuch as were *Metaphyſical* and purely National) they had their hands full of the *foreign Enemy*, and had the leſs temptation to jangle among *themſelves*. So alſo when they were under the greateſt ſtorms of perſecution, when the Church was moſt violently aſſaulted from *without*, it had the greateſt Calm *within*. They were then inceſſantly employed, and buſied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Thoſe cloudy days made them keep cloſe at home waiting for the Bride-

Bridegrooms coming, and ſuffer'd them not to wander abroad for thoſe unprofitable Curioſities, which though like *Oil* they might nouriſh *flame*, yet would never furniſh their *Lamps*, or gain them admiſſion to the wedding but in the intervals, and eſpecially after the total ceſſation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their *Vigilance*, than while they ſlept, the Envious man had advantage to ſow his *Tares*. Reſt made them *idle*, Idleneſs made them *curious*, and Curioſity *contentious*; and thoſe who under the Tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony under the gentle pious regiment of a *Conſtantine*, grew to the greateſt diſcord, and perhaps (beſides the Divine and extraordinary ſupports the Church had in her greateſt *conflicts*) this may be one of the beſt natural *accounts*, how ſhe came to flouriſh moſt under her heavieſt *preſſures*.

BUT our obſervation ends not here, for beſides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which perſecuting times occaſion'd, Chriſtianity is in its frame and conſtitution an *active State*, has its ſtanding buſineſs, and beſides all *accidental*, a Series of *determinate, conſtant employments*, ſufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is throughly adverted to, there will be few *chaſms* of Time to be filled with *foreign impertinences*. And this gives a clear account how our *diviſions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of *practick duties*, for as every age degenerated more from

from *Primitive piety*, so they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, so that of *dispute* gathered heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far our *good works* fall short of the first Christians, we need not wonder to see our *controversies* so far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diversion* of Christian Practice among the *effects* of our Contentions, and foresee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cause* also: But alas, its concern in them is so extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream, and like a *circle* unites in *its self* Beginning and End: For as it first gave *birth* to our quarrels, so it finally receives *encrease* from them. In short, our oscitant *lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again, for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Christianity has been thus pernicious, so have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find St. *Paul* takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deserted their own *Ecclesiastical* Office, grew *busie-bodies* in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth invert the note, and observe that *those*, who either desert or neglect their *Secular* Callings, are the most perniciously *medling* in Ecclesiastick matters. Did men conscientiously employ

ploy themſelves in their *honeſt occupations*, their Minds would be ſufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or diſcipline; Divinity would not then paſs the *Yard* and *Loom*, the *Forge* and *Anvil*, nor Preaching be taken in as an eaſier ſupplementary *Trade*, by thoſe that diſliked the *pains* of their own. But all this alas we have ſeen to the equal ſhame and detriment of Piety. *Mechanicks* of all ſorts have preſum'd to *teach* what themſelves never *learnt*; and thoſe that ſerv'd long *Apprentiſhips* to other Crafts, have become *Divines* in a moment, and with the ſame æmulous induſtry wherewith they us'd to invent new *faſhions*, have made new *Religions*. And as Idleneſs has thus made ſome *Preachers*, ſo it has made more *hearers*, thoſe who either by the *eaſineſs* of their Callings, or their ſlight managery of them, have had the moſt *vacant time*, have been the apteſt to run after *new teachers*: Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great *nurſeries of faction*, the *leiſure* of Shop-men making them more *inquiſitive* after, and *receptive* of Novelties. And were that *over-grown zeal* of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that ſort of men throughly ſcanned, we ſhould find Idleneſs goes very far in its *compoſition*, for beſides that Hearing is the moſt *lazy* of all religious Offices, as appears by the *undiſturb'd ſleeps* men can take at Sermons; it is manifeſt this inſatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not *having* buſineſs,

or

or not *attending* to it. For should I ask such men, whether if necessity had enforc'd St. *Pauls* rule upon them, that without their *labour* they should not *eat*, they would have spent their whole week at *Lectures*, and trusted to be fed by the *Ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with so exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the issue it sometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching Ears* forget the rest of the *body*, whilest to gratifie *them*, they totally neglect all care of their *Secular concerns*, and bring Themselves and Families to want and beggary.

NOR is it only this *one rank* of Persons whom Idleness has betrayed to faction, *Servants* we have frequently seen under the same Seducement, while either having but *little work*, or but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to listen after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirst after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, spend their *time*, which by compact is their Masters (and can with no more justice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who instruct them so in their Christian *liberty*, that they bring them to defie all *subjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man Master upon *Earth*, that they are to own no King nor Priest but *Christ*; teach them to contemn all Authority, *Domestick*, *Civil* or *Ecclesiastick*.

IF we look farther into *families*, we shall find also that many of our She-zealots become so upon the very same ground, when *Women* neglect that

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THUS we ſee how the *Idleneſs* even of the moſt

most inconsiderable persons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the Church, which like a *Clock* or *Watch* may be disorder'd by the *rust* of the least *Pin*; how much more then, by that of the *main wheels* and *springs*; if Negligence in *lay-callings* have though but an oblique, yet so inauspicious an Influence, the like Neglect in *Ecclesiastick* must needs have a worse, because more immediate and direct. And would to God we could say this had been wanting to the compleating the mischief: But alas, many of those who are called to labour in the *Lords Vineyard*, seem to have forgot their Errand, and stand there all the day *Idle* (a much worse sight than to have seen them so only in the *Market-place*;) so that I fear there is too evident ground of saying, that the *slight execution* of the Pastoral Office, has been *one* of the most eminent Contributors to our distractions. And among *all the parts* of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciously neglected than that of *Catechizing*; the want whereof has left People so unbottom'd, that like a *house* built on the *sand*, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profest, but understood not. This is that which has made so many *unstable Souls*, as St. *Peter* observes, 2 *Pet.* 2. 14. to be the proper prey of Deceivers. And God knows, we may from sad experiment confirm the note. I wish the same *negligence* do not again evidence its self by the same *effects*: But besides this, which is part of the *Publick* Ministry, (and deservedly is so, being useful

uſeful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are *private* Intercourſes between Paſtor and People which are of *great uſe*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* Shepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common Paſture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence obſerve the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their ſingle *ſtrayings* and *diſeaſes*, and accordingly applies himſelf to reduce or cure them, and ſurely the like care is full as neceſſary in the *ſpiritual* Shepherd, 'tis not the *counſel* which is promiſcuouſly diſpenced in a Sermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is leaſt proper for him) that will do the *buſineſs*: Converts come not in now as in St. *Peters* days, in throngs and ſhoals, a more diſtinct and particular application is now neceſſary; men muſt be treated with apart, their particular *wants* diſcern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *inſtructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis theſe appropriate *Medicines*, that are like to make *ſound flocks*. Had Miniſters generally beſtowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have fruſtrated the *attempts* of Seducers, who could not ſo eaſily have inſinuated themſelves into the people, had they found them thus prepoſſeſt: but while theſe with all the arts of a ſubtile *induſtry* infuſe their *poyſons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in adminiſtring *Antidotes*, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I ſhall leave to the Conſciences of concern'd

concern'd persons to determine. But besides the *ill influence* the Pastors negligence has on the *People,* it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leisure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *speculative persons,* to the study of those *curious questions,* which are the great *disturbers* of our Peace; and of those that study them so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fomented by it: whereas were the *practical business* of their Charge throughly attended, the *remainder of time* would not be more than the *study* of the more solid, useful parts of Divinity would exact, and consequently there would no *surplus* be left for those *dangerous impertinencies, which* as the Apostle says, *serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers,* 2 Tim. 2. 14. But when our Watchmen *sleep,* 'tis no marvail if they *dream* too, and entertain themselves and others with those *Phantastick notions,* which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of *weight* and *reality,* besides the Mischiefs they wrought.

AND indeed if we scan the *volumes* of those vain Speculations, we shall have cause to conclude that Idleness has *created* as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: and that not only the extemporary *Chimœra's of Phanaticks,* but the more elaborate *nicities of the Schools,* have been thus derived: we know *Air* possesses no *place,* where it first finds not a *vacuity,* nor could those lighter *notions,*

tions, have filled mens *brains*, had they found them prepoſſeſt with what was more *ſolid*: but when men wanted more *ſubſtantial work* for their Underſtandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making *Cob-webs*, of which they have made a worſe ſort of *Jewiſh* veil in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the *Goſpel* in greater Obſcurities, than the *Law*, was before: whence our *Bezaleels* and *Aholiabs* have been inſpir'd for this work I ſhall not determine; but ſure not from him whoſe Character S. *John* gives us (in peculiar reference to goſpel revelation) that *he is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all*, 1 Jo. 1.5.

THUS we ſee even *Idleneſs* wants not its *operation*; but is productive of great and miſchievous *effects*; it being the unhappy *property* of that Vice, that it *ſupplants* its Self, and by a fatal *Antiperiſtaſis* makes men perniciouſly *active*: ſo that we may truly ſay *ſloth* has made more Buſineſs than *induſtry*. I am ſure in this inſtance it has cut out work for many ages, though of ſuch a kind, that we have little reaſon to wiſh that our *Lord* at his coming ſhould find us *ſo doing*: yet for ought now appears, our *activity* is ſo wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the *only*, at leaſt the moſt *intenſe buſineſs* we ſhall be found at.

I MIGHT here take a very apt occaſion to declame againſt Idleneſs, as the unhappy fountain of ſo great miſchiefs, but that is a *vice* that has been ſo often *arraign'd*, that I need not re-

peat those *charges* which all Authors, Natural, Moral and Divine have laid against it. Let but this of its being the Original of *faction* be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a most *dangerous crime*: yea, and a most *monstrous* one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that *freezes* and yet *inflames* men at once, *stupifies* and *enrages*: And yet alas, there is as much riddle in its *fate* as its *nature*; 'tis *hated*, and yet *embraced*; generally *decried*, and yet as generally *cherished*: and though it have no *advocates*, has many *friends*. Would God men would at last be ashamed to *be* what they are asham'd to *own*, and by a diligent attendance on their proper business, secure themselves first from doing *nothing*, and then from doing *ill*; the one being so close an Attendant on the other, that 'tis scarce possible to sever them. And God knows the Church finds too sad proof of their connection. *Idleness* having serv'd as *Ashes* to keep alive that *fire* which has set her in *combustion*. Thus unhappily *passive* is she in our disorders, and *accessary* to all our Guilts and Punishments: All our peccant *humors* concur to her *disease*, and like a common *mark* she receives *arrows* from all Quarters, we have seen how many *Contributers* there are to her *ruine*, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like *Cæsar*'s murderers) are ambitious to inflict *new wounds*, and to give her *Supernumerary deaths*; and whilest she is thus surrounded with *Assassines*, what can we expect but that her present *languishings*

guiſhings ſhould End in *death*. That Chriſtian Religion now crumbled into ſo many *minute fractions*, ſhould like *duſt* be ſcatter'd, and irrecoverably diſſipated, and thus infallibly it muſt be, if either *God* do not miraculouſly countermine us, and do more *for* us than we can do *againſt* our ſelves, or we recover ſo much ſobriety, as to forbear to *Maſſacre* what we pretend to *Love*, and endeavour to bind up thoſe *wounds* at which our own Souls are like to *Expire*.

CHAP. XIX.

The Concluſion drawn from all the Premiſes.

WE have hitherto examin'd the *effects* and *originals* of our contentions, and now the only remaining Enquiry is concerning the *ways* of redreſs. And that will exact no long diſquiſition: for as in *diſeaſes* 'tis ſaid, the knowing the *cauſe* is one half of the *cure*; ſo more eſpecially is it here, where the *remedies* are meerly *privative*, and we are not to be healed by *external applications*, but only by *ſubſtracting* thoſe Humors which feed the Malady: There will therefore need no other *preſcription* than to adviſe

the *exterminating* of all thoſe Paſſions and Intereſts which have appear'd acceſſary to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick *Epidemick diſeaſe*, yet as the *infection* did, ſo muſt the *cure* ariſe from ſingle perſons: for as we look not a *common Peſtilence* ſhould ceaſe without due care and manage both of the *ſick* and *ſound*: ſo neither can this *Church plague* ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its *individual members*.

LET every man therefore who has any way made himſelf a Party to theſe conteſts, ſeriouſly interrogate his own heart; what it is that has engag'd Him in them: if any of the *ſiniſter motives* before rehearſt, let him for a while ſhift the *Scene*, and inſtead of *accuſing others* as Oppoſites to Truth, *condemn himſelf* as Enemy to Peace: remembring that how juſt or important ſoever the *cauſe* be, it is no ſo to *him*; whileſt he ſerves his humors and deſigns under its covert. The *Philoſophers* in their darker notions of *Truth* could yet diſcern, that ſhe was not acceſſible to *any* who ſought her not purely for *her ſelf*, with ſincere and ſingle Intentions, and if ſhe entertain no *Pupils* that are not ſo qualified, is it fit ſhe ſhould have *Guardians* and *Champions* of a quite diſtant Temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of *Speculative* Verity, muſt firſt poſſeſs himſelf of that *practick* Truth the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of, *Pſ.* 51. That *in the inward parts*, ſuch a ſimplicity and integrity of Purpoſe, as may ſupplant all thoſe indirect Aims, purge out every prejudice and paſſion,

ſion, which may byaſs, and pervert him; and by that time he has done *this*, 'tis odds but he will find a *new face of affairs*, and diſcern that many of thoſe things he ſo fiercely contended about, were either falſe or trivial; acquir'd their *conſiderableneſs* only from thoſe *magnifying perſpectives* of his own Luſts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himſelf of all theſe *encumbrances*, he is utterly unqualified for theſe *Agones*; and how lawfully ſoever others may ſtrive, 'tis ſure he cannot, that does it upon ſo unlawful grounds, and therefore upon *pain* of loſing much more than a *corruptible crown* muſt *withdraw himſelf*. As for thoſe who can yet *acquit* themſelves from having fomented our Diſtractions, I ſhall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by conſidering how valuable a *piece of Innocency* it is, engage and encourage themſelves to *preſerve* it; and to that purpoſe, jealouſly to examine the *firſt overtures* of a Temptation. When they find any *proneneſs* to immerce in Faction, any unwonted *heat* towards a Diſſenter, to trace it to its *fountain* and *original*; nicely to obſerve whether it iſſue not from ſome of thoſe *envenom'd ſprings* forementioned, and make as much haſt to ſtop its *currant*, as they would to impede the moſt *overwhelming inundation*; for ſuch 'twill infallibly prove to thoſe who indulge to its courſe. But as a *Turf* will at firſt cloſe the *breach*, which neglected becomes the *inlet* of a mighty *Torrent*: ſo had this *early vigilance* been us'd, it might

with ease have prevented those Distempers, in *private* Beasts, from whence the *general* Confusion has sprung. As it is, might but these two things be obtain'd, would but the Guilty *purge*, and the Innocent *guard* themselves, we might yet hope to see an *end* of our Discords: not that I suppose it possible to extinguish *all diversity* of Opinions among men, who from their *differing faculties*, and other *guiltless occurrents*, may and will have their *judgments* severally dispos'd. But first, were *all*, who have upon the former culpable motives enter'd the lists, *excluded*, we should find They would amount to such a Number, that there would be *few left* to maintain the Combat. Nay, secondly, were it not for those *conceal'd inducements*, there would scarce be any *Combat* to maintain, those are the things that convey the *sting* and *malignity* into our Differences, without those we might dissent, but not fall out; and should no more be angry to see another *opine contrary to us*, than we are to see him of a *differing stature*, or *complexion*. In fine, let us pretend what we will, 'tis the Carnality *within*, that raises all the Combustions *without*: This is the great *wheel* to which the Clock owes its *motion*, while the *pretext* of Truth and Piety is but like the *hand*, set indeed more conspicuously, but directed wholly by the *secret movings* of the other. This, *this* alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monstrous conjunction of *Properties*, is its self both *flame* and *fuel*: Nor can we doubt that from hence spring those railing accusations,

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we bring one againſt another, if we remember what St. *Jude* tells us that the *Angel* brought them not even againſt the *Devil* himſelf, he could calmly manage a *diſpute* with the moſt execrable and provoking *adverſary*, becauſe his *Angelick nature* had none of that *carnal leaven* which ferments to the *ſouring* of ours, an evident Indication what it is that has rendred our arguings ſo invective, that *divinity* ſeems now an Artifice to elude *law* by daily patronizing thoſe *Libels*, which would elſe be Obnoxious to *civil Juſtice*.

BUT I preſume there need no more be ſaid to evince this, which has, I fear, the atteſtation of too many conſciences, to be generally doubted; the *greater difficulty* will be, to perſwade the depoſiting of thoſe *luſts*, which though they are confeſtly the *Boutefieus* among us, have yet by I know not what Faſcination ſo *endear'd* Themſelves, that we tenaciouſly *retain* them in ſpight of all their appendent Miſchiefs; nay, we *cheriſh* and *foſter* them, and for that very purpoſe bring them under the *covert* of Religion. He that has but a *puny vice*, if he get it like *Joaſh* conceal'd and ſhelter'd in the *Sanctuary*, 'twill not only *live*, but *reign* too. Put on a Port and Majeſty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that Piety, whoſe Eſſence and Being it evacuates and undermines.

INDEED ſin never arrives at ſo luxuriant a *growth*, as when it roots in *hallowed ground*, which *Satan* ſo well knows, that he has ever been induſtrious to *plant* it in that *ſoil*. Thus we find he

had introduced the most *brutish crimes* into the religion of the *Gentiles*, interwoven them into their Sacred *Rites* and *Mysteries*, till vertue and vice had changed names, and it became *piety* to be Wicked, and *profaneness* to be Innocent. And when that gross deceit became detected *by Gospel light*, when he could not in the same manner obtrude upon *Christians*, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by starting these religious *quarrels*, gave at once employment and reputation to the most irreligious *vices*. For alas, what part of wild *fury* was there in the Heathen *Bacchanals*, which we have not seen Equall'd if not Exceeded by some *intoxicated zealots*? Or what *cruelty* in their most barbarous *rites*, which has not been matcht by the *inhumanity* of dissenting Christians? So that upon a just scanning, all our splendid *pretence* of Sanctity is but an *emulation* of Gentile Impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their *Moral vertues*, We are yet so stupid as to hope our selves to be saved by their *worst vices*.

AND now who that does enough *consider* can think he can enough *bewail* this sad state of affairs: That Christianity should thus out-run its self, and bring us round to *Gentilism* again, whilst her Professors ridiculously contend for the *title* of the best Christians, by *such acts* as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the *significancy* of that *Sacred Name*, and made it serve only to upbraid the *contrariety* of *our practice*; so that *that* which was once the *Index* to

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point out all *Moral* and *Divine vertues*, does now on the contrary mark out *that part* of the World, where *leaſt of them* reſide. This, this alone is the *prize* we have acquir'd with ſo much *ſweat* and *blood*, this the *Triumph* we have brought to our Religion, which indeed could never have ſunk to ſuch a *deſpicableneſs* by any Endeavours but our *own*; for ſo long as Chriſtianity waged *war* only with *foreign* enemies ſhe never miſt to be *victorious*, but ſince that theſe *inteſtine diſcords* have turn'd her force againſt *her ſelf*, *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos*, there is no poſſibility of ſucceſs, the meer *fight* implies a *defeat*, and the *ſwords* of all Parties meet in her *bowels*. 'Twas a paſſionate *expoſtulation* that *Julia* is ſaid to have us'd with her two ſons *Antonine* and *Geta*, whoſe animoſities having prompted them to *divide* the Empire, which they were joyntly to have *enjoyed*, ſhe askt them whether they would divide their Mother alſo; implying how much their *diſcords* had rackt and torn her. And ſure our *common Mother* may make a yet ſadder *complaint* of her Sons, by whoſe *unkind diſſentions* ſhe is ſo miſerably *mangled*, that ſhe may cry out with the *Pſalmiſt*, *My ſoul is among Lions, and I lye among the Children of men that are ſet on fire.*

AND now if amidſt all our *importunate pretences* to Piety, there be indeed any ſuch thing among us, methinks it ſhould give us ſome *relentings*, make us ſadly conſider to what a *deplorable condition* we have brought that very *religion* on which we profeſs to hang all our *hopes*; and would

would God those who are the most nearly concerned in this Contemplation would pursue it to the utmost; let them on the one hand set the most *glittering temptations* to Discord, and on the other let them view the *dismal effects* of it, and then consider at how *dear a rate* they gratifie a few *impotent Passions*. Can any man without Horrour think that his *thirst* of Glory has brought *dishonour* to his Religion, and consequently to his God; that his *curious enquiries* into things secret, has help't to Evacuate the more *useful things* Revealed; or in short, that his *pursuit* of his various *intereſts* and *appetites* has destroyed what was so incomparably more valuable, the *honour* of the Gospel, the *unity* of the Church, and as many *souls* as have perisht by that scandal. 'Twas as infamous a Character of *inhumanity* as the very *Poets* could feign of *Diomedes*, that *he fed his horses with mans flesh*; but alas, that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when Men nourish far *worse bruits*, their own unreasonable *lusts*, with those things that are most *sacred*. Certainly were the vastness of this *guilt* throughly weighed, 'twould make men sick of those petty wretched *acquests* they have thus purchased, make them fling back this *price of blood*, I say not with the same *despair*, but with as great *remorse* and *detestation* as *Judas* did the *silver pieces* for which he sold his Master. 'Tis sure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumstances, so especially in this, that as the one *was*, so the other *is* most frequently the Guilt of an *Apostle*, I mean of those to whom

whom Chriſt has committed the diſpenſing of that Goſpel which they thus evacuate, and doubtleſs this is a conſideration of great enhanſement, as that which ſuperadds *treachery* to all the other peſtilent *ingredients* of the Crime; 'tis the *falſifying* the moſt important *truſt*, for under words of that ſignification we find the *office* of the Miniſtry every where repreſented in Scripture, as *Stewards*, *Ambaſſadors*, *Shepherds*, and conſequently the accounts of the ſin muſt ſwell ſo much the higher. For a Steward to *embezle* thoſe Goods he undertakes to *manage*; an Ambaſſador to *betray* his Prince for whom he ſhould *negotiate*; a Shepherd to *worry* that Flock which he is ſet to *guard*, theſe are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all *thoſe* whoſe *profeſſion* having devoted them to the *Church*, have impiouſly chang'd the *Scene*, and devoted the Church to *them*, ſerv'd all their mean degenerous ends upon her; and as *Chyrurgeons* are ſaid ſometimes to deal with profitable Patients, kept open, nay, widened her *wounds* for their own *advantages*.

IT has been the *Prieſts Litany* as ancient as *Joels* time, *Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach*; but now alas, who ſhall prevail with them to do that themſelves which they beg of God, to ſpare his people and his heritage; to proſtitute them no more to their own ſiniſter deſigns, nor by their vain and endleſs *contentions*, expoſe them as well to *ruine* as *contempt*. He were indeed a happy Orator that could in this

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effectually intercede with them, though One would think the *wonder* should lye on the other side, and the only strange thing be, that they should either *need* or *resist* such a solicitation, it being so much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the score of *advantage* as *duty*, to be dear to them; so that the *Church* may most aptly address to these her *Sons* in the same form St. *Paul* does to the *Philippians* when he conjures them to unity, *Phil.* 2. 1. *If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my Joy that you be like minded.* And can it be possible for any who have tasted all or any of these, to think fit to wrangle them away; to exchange these divine *irradiations*, the Antepast and Emblem of Heaven, for those bitter *dissentions*, whose *Alpha* and *Omega*, their *original* and *end* are Hell, and do as lively represent as they certainly lead to the horrour and confusion of that land of Darkness.

BUT if some mens appetites be so depraved, that they find more Melody in *discord*, than in the *harmony* of the Angelick Quires, yet even these can discern *Musick* in a consort of *Plaudites*, and seldom miss to be affected with those *Eulogies* which are given themselves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apostles motives, *Phil.* 4. 8. and will do nothing for vertue, yet they may be presum'd more considerate of Praise: And God knows, in a wrong sense they are too much so; and sure, as we have already observed

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by it, have made no ſmall *contributions* to our *diſcords*: yet did they meaſure *Glory* by its right and proper *Standard*, they would find they have all this while courted a *ſhadow*, and that the *ſubſtance* will never be acquir'd by being *fomenters* of publick Miſchief; but the unhappineſs of it is, that our *Eccleſiaſtick* as our *Secular* Duelliſts abuſe themſelves with falſe notions of Honor, novel Opinions and ſubtile Queſtions they think atteſt the *pregnancy* and *acuteneſs* of their Underſtandings, and give them *reputation*; but alas, how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the *Sagacity* of the Viper, that Eats her way through her *mothers bowels*? Or who reverences a man for the *ſharpneſs* of that Sword wherewith he commits his *Paricide*? Nay, what more infamous brands have Records of all ages ſtuck upon any, than thoſe who were *Ingenioſiſſime nequam, & facundi malo publico*, who us'd the beſt Parts to the worſt Ends, and with the greateſt *cunning* and *artifice* have contrived their *miſchiefs*?

BUT could we abſtract from theſe *pernicious effects*, and ſuppoſe that this *exerciſe* of their Faculties were *innocent*, yet ſure it would be too *light* and *impertinent* to become *matter of praiſe*. He that ſhould ſpend all his Time in *tying* inextricable Knots, only to baffle the Induſtry of thoſe that ſhould attempt to *unlooſe* them, would ſure be thought not much to have ſerv'd his generation. 'Tis one of the certaineſt *Eſtimates* we can make of a man, to meaſure him by the *employments* he chuſes, if thoſe be *ſlight* and *trifling*, they ſuggeſt

ſuggeſt the Perſon to have *low thoughts*; what an abaſement of Majeſty was it thought in *Nero* to become a *Fidler* and *Stage-player*; and *Herodian* tells us, that men hoped no longer for any thing princely from *Commodus* the Emperor, when he had once liſted himſelf among the *Fencers*, and inſtead of the magnificent *ſtyles* of his Predeceſſors, derived from the *conqueſts* of great and populous Nations, aſſumed This, *The vanquiſher of a Thouſand Gladiators*: And certainly 'tis no leſs a deſcent and diminution for thoſe who were deſign'd by God for the *higheſt atchievements*, the ſubduing the Kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his ſtrong holds, to devote themſelves to theſe ſo much *ignobler conteſts*, and account their *conqueſts*, not from the number of *Souls* won to God, but of *Oppoſers* worſted in Argument. Indeed, as we before obſerv'd, they have now rendred the *Church* a kind of *Theatre*, Diſputes are managed with ſuch Sleight and Sophiſtry, that at the beſt, the *litigants* do but ſet forth a ſhew of *Fencers*: 'Twere well if they did not ſometimes play the *Gladiators*, by that wounding deadly ſharpneſs they uſe, and 'twould be conſider'd what a change is now made: In the Primitive times, none that own'd any *relation* to the Church were allowed to be *ſpectators* of thoſe Games, now That is made the *Stage*, and her ableſt Perſons the *Actors*. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of thoſe who have ſo unworthily debaucht both it and themſelves; and therefore to all other *diſſwaſives* we may add this

of

of the *Uncreditableneſs*: For let men phancy what they pleaſe of the *Glory* acquir'd in theſe opportunities of ſhewing their parts, the beſt that can be ſaid of them is, that *they uſe Wit fooliſhly*; A character whereof the one part devours the other, and leaves not ſo much as a mouthful of that *popular air* which theſe *Camælions* gaſp after. In a word, though *vain-glory* be a principle I ſhall commend to no man, yet in this caſe 'twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what were really *praiſe-worthy*, and then ſure 'twould encline them rather to *cloſe* than *widen* the breaches of *Sion*. To inflict *wounds* on an unreſiſting Patient, is a thing that requires neither *courage* nor *skill*: Every man can do that who has but ill nature enough, but to *cure* them is an act at once of *Art* and *Mercy*, and entitles to the Praiſe of both; and therefore if any mans *eagerneſs* of Glory, have made him over-ſee the *way* to it, let him now at laſt recover his *wandrings*, and ſeek it in this one only proper *Method*.

BUT this is, I confeſs, a *Topick* of Perſwaſion fitter for *Philoſophers* than *Divines*, and I wiſh I may have urg'd it impertinently; it being much leſs ſhame for *me* to have done ſo, than for *them* to need ſuch an Argument. There is another more genuine and proper, derived from the nature of *diſtributive Juſtice*, which requires a man to do his *Utmoſt* to repair the *injuries* he has done to any, this is ſo ſtated a *rule*, that all our *Caſuiſts* juſtly preſs it in all caſes of damage: But are there

there not many of them, who while they so eagerly assert that *obligation* in other mens cases, do as *David* did in the matter of the poor mans Lamb, severely sentence that *injustice*, whereof *themselves* are more highly Guilty. To every such I would speak in the words of *Nathan*, and say *thou art the Man*. Alas, shall every little *trifle* I purloin from my Neighbour have *weight* enough to sink me to the *abysse*, and shall *thefts* of the greatest magnitude, the robbing God of his *honour*, the Church not only of her *Patrimony*, but her *Peace*, and the World of those inestimable *benefits*, which from a uniform consonant Christianity were to have been transmitted to it? Shall these I say be so slight and inconsiderable, as not to hinder his ascent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the least *violence* I offer to the person of an Enemy oblige me to *satisfaction*, and shall he rend and tear the *body* of his Saviour (who willingly expos'd his *natural* body only in tenderness to that *mystical* one, which is thus violated) and shall this criminous *barbarity* exact no offers towards *amends*? Certainly no man can have *partiality* enough to think it, and if he do not, he is to remember *himself* indispensably engag'd to take the same *course* he prescribes to *others*, and with his utmost *industry* endeavour to repair the *injury* he has done.

AND O that we might see this so essential a piece of *Justice* assum'd among us, that our impertinent *strifes* might be superseded, and all moulded into the one noble *Emulation*, who shall fastest

faſteſt unravel his own *miſchiefs*, and promote that *peace* he has hitherto diſturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united deſign of all learned men; and were it once ſo, who knows how proſperous it might be: For though ſome *ſingle attempts* have miſcarried, yet probably one great *cauſe* why they do ſo, was becauſe they were *ſingle*. When one Perſon comes with *pacifick arguments* to part an *enraged multitude*, let his Reaſons be never ſo convincing, they are not like to be much adverted to; the only *effect* is, that he who deſign'd himſelf the common *Friend*, is taken as the common *Enemy*; but where many aſſociate in ſuch a deſign, and make a party for peace, their *numbers* give a conſiderableneſs to their *propoſal*, and prepare for their *ſucceſs*. And were there ſuch a *combination* in order to the Churches Quiet, it were more than poſſible they might undermine the *contrary attempts* of Faction and Diſcord.

AND why ſhould not every man be *ambitious* to make one in this ſo *pious a confederacy*, and reſolve moſt ſtudiouſly to endeavour the *compoſing* the Diſtractions of the Church, in which they may borrow ſomething of *inſtruction* even from their paſt guilts, and copy out their own *induſtry* to this better purpoſe. This is ſure; our *diſputes* had never ſo multiplied, had there not been a great deal of *unhappy diligence* in nouriſhing the ſeeds of them: Every *controverted Tenet* has been heightned and improved, till it have ſpawn'd a *numerous brood*, ſo that thoſe who at firſt *differ'd*,

perhaps but in ſome *few* things, wrangle on, till at laſt they *agree* in *fewer*: Now were the like Induſtry applied the *other way*, it might ſure do much to the changing the *whole Scene*. If men would as nicely obſerve the Principles of *agreement* between *diſſenting parties*, and with as much Art and Care ſeek to dilate and ſpread them; why might not they as much *overwhelm* our *Differences*, as they have been *overwhelmed* by them? 'Tis ſure that thoſe Univerſal *truths*, to which all Parties aſſent, are, as the *cleareſt* for their Evidence, ſo the moſt *important* for their Conſequence: And why ſhould not *theſe*, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing *motive* to Unity, than the more *ſingular opinions* (perhaps phancies) of ſome men, can be to Diſcord? Certainly would but our *Moſes*'s try what this *rod* of *God* in their hand could do, they would find it able to devour all *thoſe* of the *Magicians*. Would they like *Benhadabs* Ambaſſadors, catch hold of every amicable *expreſſion*, any thing that looks towards *Peace*, and cloſe in with it, they might probably ſee *Effects*, beyond what can at diſtance be expected. For ſure *Peace* is not ſuch a *dry Tree*, ſuch a Sapleſs unfertile thing, but that it might *fructifie* and *encreaſe* as well as *Diſcord*, were there a juſt care taken to Cheriſh and nouriſh it.

INDEED this Deſign is the only *Amulet* which can render it ſafe to look into *controverſies*, which are elſe apt to infuſe a kind of *acrimony*, and *venome* into mens ſpirits; For we ſee many,

many, whoſe *curioſity* at firſt brought them as unconcern'd *ſpectators*, do within a while engage with all earneſtneſs in the *conteſt*: but thoſe who ſtudy differences only with an aim of compoſing them, theſe have their thoughts determin'd and fixt, and ſo not left looſe to the enticements of any Party. *Ariſtotle* ſays that on the Hill *Olympus* the Air is ſo ſubtil and piercing, that thoſe who aſcend thither, are forced to carry with them *wet Spunges*, by that *moiſture* ſomewhat to allay that extreme *tenuity* which otherwiſe would be deadly; and ſure they that deal in *controverſies*, live in no leſs *corroſive an Air*, and therefore had need make the like proviſion, and carry with them this *Pacifick purpoſe*, as a *lenitive* and *Emollient* againſt the infectious *ſharpneſs* they will there meet with.

AND now how bleſſed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow the things that make for Peace, that the *numberleſs mutual enmities* which are now among us, may all be reduced into *one*, that we may fight not againſt *ſingle Adverſaries*, but againſt *War* its ſelf, and contend againſt *nothing* but *contention*. And ſure our victory here were worth millions of thoſe petty conqueſts wherewith men pleaſe themſelves, and which acquire them ſo little of real advantage, that the ſame account which was given of *Otho* and *Vitellius*, that the *war* would ſwallow up the one, and the *victory* the other, is too applicable to our *combatants*, who are like to be equally unhappy in *defeat* or *ſucceſs*. The *Spartans* had an

Order that when any of their *Generals* had compaſſed his Deſign by *policy* or *treaty*, he ſhould ſacrifice an *Oxe*, but when by *force* and *bloudſhed*, a *Cock* only: from the diſtant values of which oblations, *Plutarch* obſerves how much they preferr'd the Atchievements of calm and ſober *counſels*, before thoſe of *ſtrength* and *power*: but ſure the diſparity is more eminent in the preſent inſtance, where if we *fight* we *wound* our Brethren, but if we *unite* we *deſtroy* our Enemy: baffle and circumvent *Satans* Maſter-ſtratagem, and not only *worſt* but *outwit* him. Indeed this and this only is worth our Induſtry, whereas thoſe *little defeats* we give Each other, are like *thoſe* in a civil War, wherein the *publick* is ſtill ſure to be a *Loſer*; upon which conſideration the *Romans* allowed not their Captains to triumph for ſuch Victories; and ſure our *Chriſtianity* is very ill beſtowed on us, if it have made us ſo much worſe natur'd, as to chooſe thoſe ruinous Conqueſts *at home*, before the moſt glorious and profitable ones *abroad*.

'TWAS *Abner*'s admonition to *Joab*, when he was in a hot purſuit of the *Iſraelites*, 2 *Sam.* 2. 26. *Shall the ſword devour for ever? knoweſt thou not that it will be bitterneſs in the later end?* and ſure 'tis more than time for our Leaders to make the ſame reflection, and as *Joab* did there, call back the People from following their Brethren: Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themſelves called back; the *great Captain* of their Salvation ſounding a *retreat* from

theſe

theſe fatal skirmiſhes. *Xenophon* in the inſtitution of *Cyrus* tells us of one *Chryſanthus*, who in the heat of battail had his hand lift up to *ſtrike* an Enemy, but hearing in the very inſtant the Trumpet ſound a *retreat*, *ſtopt* his blow. A great ſobriety of *courage* ſo to ſhew more Zeal to the *obeying* his General, than the *annoying* his Enemy; and an Inſtance of much *reproach* to our *Spiritual Combatants*, who have ſhewed themſelves ſo much worſe diſciplin'd, as in ſpight of daily repeated *calls* to Peace, ſtill to *purſue* their Hoſtility: But ſure ſuch an *inſolence* is ſo inconſiſtent with the *pretence* they make of fighting Gods Battails, that they muſt either *reform* the one, or *diſclaim* the other.

AND now if after all that hath or can be ſaid of the *obligation*, *neceſſity*, or *advantages* of Peace, we are put to the Pſalmiſts Complaint, *that there are ſtill thoſe that will make them ready to battail*: if men are of ſo untreatable a Temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them: what remains for thoſe that are Peaceable and Faithful in *Iſrael*, but to *bewail* thoſe Miſchiefs they cannot *redreſs*? If the Church muſt periſh, at leaſt to give her Funeral rites, and if they cannot quench her *flames*, yet to bedew her *aſhes* with their *tears*. 'Tis true, we cannot yet ſay ſhe is quite *dead*; but though ſhe *breaths* yet in a few pious peaceful Souls, yet like a *Palſied perſon*, ſhe ſcarce *moves* a Limb, ſhe wants vigor to actuate the generality of her profeſſors, and remains rather a *trunk* than a *body*: and ſure if there be truth in that

Physick Aphorism, which sayes that *diseases which cross the temper and constitution of the Patient are most dangerous*; we may well conclude her *desperate*, there being nothing more repugning to the very Elements and Principles of her Being, than those contentions under which she now *groans*.

YET there is an *omnipotent Power* to whom no Difficulties are insuperable, an *unerring Physician* who makes the most hopeless Diseases, but the Triumph of his Art. O let us resort to him, and invite his Aids in the same pathetick form, wherewith he was solicited for *Lazarus*, Jo. 11. 3. *Lord behold she whom thou lovest is sick*: She for whose sake thou endured'st such contradiction of *sinners* against thy self, is now by the contradiction of her own *Children*, languishing and expiring: she for whom thou pour'dst out *thy bloud*, lies weltring in her *own*, Lord save or she perisheth: Were such Petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathing of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be. In this sense also *Heaven* might suffer *violence*; nor is there any better countermine to all the *outrages* acted upon Earth than by making them thus reverberate in our *cries* and *prayers*.

AND perhaps *this* Consideration will draw us all, even the most *peaceful* of us into the *guilt* of a negative Accessarineſs to the present Mischiefs. There are divers that dislike our *contentions*, and blame the *abettors*; but yet with such Un-

Unconcern'dneſs and Indifferency, as that where-with we commonly talk of the *combuſtions* of foreign States, wherein we rather expreſs our *Judgment* than our *reſentments*, and do make it more our *diſcourſe* than our *concern*. And even of thoſe who have in ſome degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been ſome way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his interceſſions? let every one ſeriouſly interrogate his own Heart, and I fear 'twill witneſs to him, that his own *private concerns* are much apter to excite his *devotions*. Let us remember with what *paſſion* and *importunity* we invoke God in our particular Exigents, and conſider whether *we* are equally affected with *thoſe* of the Church: Haſt thou been like *Hezekiah*, ſick unto death? and haſt thou with him wept ſore, and vehemently ſolicited a recovery? has thy *eſtate* been invaded by Oppreſſion, thy *fame* by Slander and Detraction? and haſt thou with loud and earneſt cries, appealed to that *God to whom vengeance belongs*? or haſt thou been in that condition which is proverbial for ſetting men to their prayers? haſt thou like *Jonas* been in a ſtorm, in minutely expectation of being ſwallowed up by the *waves*, if not the *Whale*; and in this Extaſie of fear, when as *thy ſoul was* as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *even melted away becauſe of the Trouble*, haſt cried unto the Lord, and even out-noys'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Haſt thou in all, or any of theſe eſtates been thus affected for thy ſelf? then remember whether thy *reſentments*

have been proportionable for *that* which is much better than thy self: If the no less imminent and pressing *dangers* of the Church, have not as much awakened thy *fervor*, given as sharp and piercing an *accent* to thy Prayers, thou must needs confess, thou hast faln short, of what thou shouldest and mightest have done towards her rescue.

AND if this Inquisition be *impartially* made, who among us can plead *not guilty*? and therefore in reflections upon our past omissions, we are *in justice* oblig'd to redouble our *Zeal*, to say over again our *Tepid heartless prayers*, and inflame them with a *Cole* from the Altar; an earnest affectionate Concern for all that is holy, such as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We see the *Ninevites* could do it when there was no visible approach of *danger*, but meerly upon the *presage* of a stranger Prophet, backt with the *consciousness* of their own Guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the *later* Motive, I am sure we far exceed them as to the *former*. The *miseries* we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withall so improvable, that after all the *black Catalogue* our Experience brings in; our Fears meet us with the *bottomless Prophetick menace*, Esay 5. 25. *for all this his Anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is stretched out still.* 'Tis the usual Oeconomy of divine Justice to make our *Crimes* our *Punishment*, and to give us up to *those ills*, which were at first, our own *depraved choice*: and God knows we have too much reason

reaſon to fear this may be our caſe: That we who have ſo perverſly violated all the *bands* of Unity, wantonly wrangled our ſelves out of all *inclinations* to Peace, ſhould never be able to reſume them; that all thoſe *gentle breathings* of Grace, by which *exaſperated Paſſions* are to be cool'd and tempered, ſhould be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be diſſipated by thoſe Whirl-winds our ſelves have rais'd: That *Chriſtianity* which we have made the ſtale and Property to our irregular *appetites*, us'd only as *fig-leaves* to hide our *ſhame*, ſhould wither and ſhrink into nothing; and that *we* who could not agree in what manner to *retain* it, ſhould at laſt too well agree to *renounce* it.

THIS alas, as it is the *fearfulleſt*, ſo is it the *probableſt* Iſſue of our wild Contentions, ſuch as nothing but the miraculous Effluxes of divine *Clemency* can avert. O let us with all the *groans* and *tears*, ſo deplor'd a Condition exacts, addreſs thither, importune the *father of Mercies* to pity *us*, who know not how to pity *our ſelves*, and that though we have caſt off *all bowels*, yet that we may find them all concenter'd *in him*: that he will heal our *wounds*; and which of all others is the moſt deſperate, our *unwillingneſs* to be healed: that the *Spirit of Peace* may overſhadow us, and impreſs on us the *dove-like qualities* of Meekneſs and Gentleneſs: that he would reſcue our Religion from our Profanation not by taking *it* from Us, but by conforming *us* to It: Finally that he would do for us, not only above what we

can

can *ask* or *think*, but beyond what we would *wish* or *chuse*, and not suffer us to *acquire* the Miseries we so eagerly *pursue*.

THIS *divine interposition* alone is it that can possibly secure us, and indeed the suit amounts to no less, than that he will *force* upon us the Blessing we *resist*, and do us good against our wills, which is so bold a *request*, that they had need be more than ordinary Favourites that shall prefer it. Those *hands* must be very pure, that are lift up in such an *intercession*: and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualifie themselves for it, by purging out not only the *levain* of Malice and Strife, but all other *filthiness* of the Flesh and Spirit: without This, we can never approve our selves to intercede in earnest; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the *ruine* of Christianity by the *contentions* of other men; when our selves contrive it by some other vice of our own? This is not to desire it should *live*, but that none but we should *kill* it. 'Twill therefore concern those who wish the *Peace* of the Church, to examine whether they do as much project for her *Purity*; otherwise 'tis a mockery to pretend such a *jealous tenderness* for her. We have seen there are more waies than one, by which Christian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that Wind blows that ship-wracks our Piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied that of all those *tempestuous blasts*, this of our *contentions* is the rougheſt and most fatal. 'Tis indeed not a single gust, but an encounter and strug-

gling

gling of ſeveral contrary winds; and God knows no *poetical deſcription* can out-doe the *horror* of the ſtorms they have rais'd; yet for ought I diſcern, there is nothing that is leſs vulgarly accuſed, which I muſt account to the Reader, as the *cauſe* why I have detain'd him ſo long upon this Head; and given it a *length* ſo unproportionable to the *preceding* parts of this Diſcourſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

The Close.

WE *have now seen the unhappy riddle of the* Unchristianness *of Christians unfolded, have observ'd the* Originals *and* Causes *of That which is too notorious to all the world in its* Effects. *And though in this cursory view the* Reader *is not to think he has any such* compleat discovery, *as should supersede his own* farther inquisition, *yet as it may serve to* awaken, *so somewhat to* assist *his Industry, give him some light and insight into the wiles of Satan: and by branding some of the chief of those* cheats *which have robb'd us of our* Piety, *prepare for the detection of the* whole Confederacy: *in the interim this* Specimen *may serve to stop his wonder at the* ruinous estate *of Christianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the most* incorruptible materials, *had all the* harmony *of parts which the most exact* Frame *and* Composure *could give it, and so was qualified both for* strength *and* beauty, *to have defied all the* injuries *of Time; yet while she has so many* Underminers, *'tis not strange to see her in the* dust, *there being no* one *of these, especially that I last insisted on, which has not destructive* efficacy *enough; first to* deface, *and then to* ruine *her.*

BUT

BUT it is but an unprofitable acquest to know the Authors *of our mischiefs if we stop there, this enquiry being matter not of meer* Curiosity, *but of the nearest and most pressing* Interest: *we search not after Malefactors for their* acquaintance, *but for their* punishment, *and our own* security; *and all our discoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpose. Let me therefore conclude with this* earnest Petition *to the Reader, That he will not to all the* native *Defects of this* discourse, *add this* accidental *one that it shall be perfectly* impertinent; *a meer waste of his Time and my own; which it will inevitably* prove, *if it engage him not in an* earnest prosecution *of those* Delinquents *it hath appeacht; and in as earnest an endeavour to repair the* Mischiefs *they have wrought.*

IN short, let every man deposit what he has here read, not with his memory *only but his* conscience, *let him there seriously ponder the Excellency of that* holy vocation, *as S.* Paul *terms it,* Eph. 4. 1. to which he is call'd: *and then as seriously consider,* whether he have *as the Apostle there exhorts,* walked worthy of it; *if he find he have not (as alas who is there that has?) let him search out as the* particulars, *so the* causes *of his Miscarriages: diligently sift out those Fallacies of* Satan, *or his own* heart; *those sly Delusions which have made him act thus prepostrously against all the Convictions of common* reason, *natural* conscience, *or Christian* experience; *and when he has discovered, let him make no delay to rescue himself from their* Treacheries, *but manfully break*

break those withs *and* cords (*which are too weak to hold any that will but in earnest remember, he is a* Nazarite, *a Person consecrate to God*) *resolutely resist the* insidious caresses *of those* Dalilah's, *which will deliver not* Himself *only, but the* Ark *to the* Philistines. *Nor is he to content himself with his own* single escape, *but to propagate the* deliverance, *to as many as he can; let him blazon and stigmatize those* Impostors (*for 'tis a* combining *with them to* conceal *them*) *warn and caution* others *against those jugling Artifices, by which* himself *was entrapped, and make his own ship-wracks a* Sea-mark *for the securing the course of other Passengers. This is the* Effect *of Christs admonition to S.* Peter, when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren; *and a piece of that Fraternal charity we all owe to every particular Soul, to whom we have opportunity to dispence it.*

But besides that private *Obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more* publick *Account, it being the only way to take off that* Scandal *we have brought upon our* Religion; *which as it was not contracted by the* irregularities *of one or two persons, but by associated and* common crimes; *so neither will it be removed by a few single, and private* Reformations; *there must be combinations, and publick* Confederacies *in* Vertue, *to ballance and counterpoise those of* Vice, *or she will never recover that pristine honour which she acquired by the general Piety of her Professors. In those primitive days there was such an abhorrence of all that was Ill, that a* vicious person *was lookt on as a kind of*

Monster

Monster *or* Prodigie, *and like a putrified Member cut off, as being not only* dangerous, *but* noisome *to the Body: but alas, the Scene is so chang'd, that the* Church *is now made up of* such *as she would then have* cast out; *and 'tis now as remarkable an Occurrent to find a* good *Christian, as it was there to see a* bad: *and since every thing is estimated not according to its rare and casual, but frequent usual Operations, 'tis easie to conclude, that* Christianity *has lost as much in its* Repute, *as it appears to have done in its* Efficacy: *nor will there be any way of repairing it, till We be generally rendred so malleable to its* impressions, *that our Lives may attest its* Force *and* Energy.

NAY indeed 'tis not only its honour, *but its* being *is concern'd in it, active Principles cease to* be *when they cease to* act. *You cannot hinder the fire to burn but by putting it out: and to* suppress *the Operation of our Religion is indeed to* extinguish *it; at least to deprive it of its proper and specifick act: so that if it can be said to be; 'tis only by that abuse of speech which calls a dead or painted man, a Man: It may perhaps be a* vizor *for the Hypocrite, a* Stale *for the Ambitious, a* wash *or* tincture *for the Covetous; but where it is* these, *it ceases to be* its self. *The* essence *and* being *of Christianity is* practice; *and according to that Test and proof thereof, where almost can it be said to Exist in the world? we have indeed some images and shadows of it: Some have taken its* picture, *but the* substance *and* solid body *is vanished, resolv'd into Air, and seems sadly to have moraliz'd the poetick Fable of*

Sybills

Sybills *being worn into a voice,* we have turn'd it into a meer noise and sound; *nay, which is worse, into an* Eccho, *that flattering complying voice, which reverberates every mans own language to him: Men dictate to their* Religion, *and then will needs perswade themselves and others, that their Religion dictates to* them, *will have the* rebounds *of their own Fancy or Lust pass for Divine* Oracles; *so suborning this Aiery fantastick Christianity to legitimate those practices, which the real solid one forbids and Execrates.*

TO this dismal forlorn estate have we brought that which was designed to bring us to bliss, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutish Sodomites, *they would have violated the Messengers of their* ruine, *but we those of our* safety: *We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the* Embassy *sent us from* Heaven, *and instead of* embracing *that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our Parts to make it* forgotten *that ever it was sent upon any such Errand; and indeed so it is like to be, if some* Heroick piety *do not revive its* Memory, *and teach us to record it not so much in our* books *as* lives: *There, and there only it will be universally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature,* the power of God unto Salvation.

AND now why should we not all Emulously contend, who shall first put off that ugly vizor *we have put upon our Religion, and restore it to its* native form; *especially considering that with its* Beauty *we lose its* Dowry *too; forfeit all those glorious* Re-

wards

wards *which it promises to them that preserve it* immaculate. *'Tis only a* pure and undefiled Religion *that will invest us in those* white robes, *wherein we are to follow the* Lamb. *And sure those who have here endeavoured to* darken *and* extinguish *all the rays of Spiritual Light, that have lived as if they profest Christianity meerly in spight to* defame *it, must never hope it shall bring them to* shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, *or procure them the* reward *of blameless Souls. No, it promises no other* Crown *than that of* Righteousness, *and therefore they that want the* Righteousness *must want the* Crown *also*: *Nay, besides that so inestimable a Reversion, they lose all those* present Joys *and* satisfactions *which true Christian practice would afford them, and which both in respect of the* intenseness *and* duration, *infinitely exceed the most* profuse sensualities *the World ever tasted.*

THESE are interests that are sure. Important enough, and yet we must be woed *to consider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverse Coyness we* hold off; *all the solicitations and importunate* Calls *of God are lookt upon as* Artifices *and* Designs, *as if he had some Ends of his own to serve upon us, and* (*as the* Corinthians *suspected St.* Paul) *meant to make a gain of us*; *we treat with him as if he were the Person to be advantaged, and barter for* Heaven *with such an Indifference, as if* It *would want* Us *more than* We It; *never considering that 'tis impossible for him to have any other* Concern, *than that which his* Compassion *to us creates,*

and the more earnest *and* passionate *That is, the more it should excite our own* care, *it being the Extremest degree of perverse Folly, to* abandon *and* despise *our own Interest meerly because a Friend or Patron* considers *and* prizes *it. And this* brand *must lye upon every one of us, who still refuse to discern* the things that belong to our Peace, *after God has done so much to render them not only* visible *but* attainable.

WHAT shall I say more, but conclude with Christs passionate wish, *that* we might in this our day, understand the things that belong to our Peace, *and O that the* Spirit *of Peace and Light would descend among us, illuminate us with that true* practical Wisdom, *which may convince us, that our* Duty *and* Interest *are the same thing under several forms, and that while we impiously cast off the* one, *we do as foolishly betray the* other. *That so those* inestimable advantages *our Christianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly lost, serve only* as a price in the hand of a Fool, who hath no heart to it, *Prov.* 17. *And to this end let us humbly and earnestly invoke the Father of lights, to* illuminate *all those whom the God of this world hath* blinded, *that after he hath sent into the world the* Image *of his own eternal brightness; caused the* Sun of Righteousness *so long to shine upon us, it may not serve only to involve us in that most* dreadful condemnation, *which awaits those who love* darkness *more than* light; *but that answering the purpose of our* holy calling, *walking as* Children of light,

light, *we may vindicate that* Christian profession *which we have so defamed, secure to our selves the light of* Gods countenance *here, and that of his* glory *hereafter.*

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAge 12. *Line* 19. for taught *Read* sought, *p.* 97. *l.* 9. for diverts *r.* divests, *p.* 99. *l.* 7. for insiduous *r.* insidious, *p.* 105. *l.* 27. for them *r.* him, *p.* 114. *l.* 14. for one *r.* own, *p.* 118. *l.* 6. for owes *r.* owns, *p.* 164. *l.* 27. for assimulation *r.* assimilation, *p.* 165. *l.* 17. for shouls *r.* shoals, *p.* 171. *l.* 16. for avow *r.* disavow.